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Theol. Homil.

For the Work of the Ministry

A MANUAL OF HOMILETICAL AND PASTORAL THEOLOGY

BY

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PREFACE.

THE chief part of this book has been delivered by the author to the students of the New College, Edinburgh, in his course of Ecclesiastical and Pastoral Theology. It is now published because he believes that when used as a text-book it may be more useful to them; and also because, so far as he is aware, no book covering the whole field of homiletical and pastoral theology has appeared in this country, at least for many years. In the United States such works have lately been very abundant; and it is somewhat singular that though both preaching and pastoral work are prosecuted among us with unusual earnestness, no complete book on the subject should have been issued in Scotland.

The critical reader will be pleased to remark that though the subject of the Church is treated in the author's class, both theoretically and practically, the

present volume is restricted to the practical side of the question. The Divine institution and the permanence of the Christian ministry are assumed as proved; the question here considered being simply, How are the duties of the ministry to be best discharged? It is but little that a teacher can contribute to the efficiency of the ministry; it will be to the author a high gratification if this volume shall render even a slight service to the cause.

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CHAPTER I.

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY A MINISTRY OF THE WORD.

THE great purposes for which the Christian ministry has been set up are familiar to us from such passages as these: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20). "I send thee to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts xxvi. 18). "He gave some . . . pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. iv. 11, 12, 13. See also 2 Cor. v. 18-21; 2 Tim. ii. 24-26). It is impossible to conceive any change so great or so glorious as that which the Christian ministry is thus designed to effect. It aims at a radical change in the relation

of men to God; an entire change, too, of character and life; it aims at bringing men habitually under the influence of the purest motives, and at making their life the best and noblest possible, and the fittest preparation for the life to come. The influence of the Christian minister must not terminate with his public services; it is designed, under God's blessing, to be a silent power with his people during every hour of their lives; in hours of work and in hours of rest, in the market-place and the counting-house, in the family and in the closet; prevailing, through the power of the Spirit, above all contrary influences, counteracting some of the strongest natural inclinations, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

For accomplishing all these changes, the chief instrument furnished to the Christian minister is—the Word. He is to come into contact with men chiefly by means of spoken truth. What his Master has committed to him is "the *word* of reconciliation" (2 Cor. v. 18). As a sower, "he soweth the *word*" (Mark iv. 14). As a preacher, he preaches the *word* (2 Tim. iv. 2). That word is "the word of salvation" (Acts xiii. 26). It is the forerunner of faith and all other vital graces—"faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. x. 17). We do not speak at present of the unseen power that makes the instrument efficient; we advert to what is outward and apparent—the means furnished to the minister for effecting the change. So far as he is concerned, that change must be effected by the delivery of a message from God—a message which, in the first instance, reveals the way to his favour, but which has bearings at the same time on the whole sphere of human life and duty.

The end of the Christian ministry is thus a marvel

of sublimity; the instrument for accomplishing it is not less a marvel of simplicity. It is often hard to believe that so great results can be achieved by the simple weapon with which the soldier of the cross is sent forth to confront the Goliath that defies the army of the living God. As of old, the wisdom of the world is ever ready to despise the sling and the stone, and is for clothing the shepherd lad in more elaborate and imposing armour. Nothing could have been of less avail under the old pagan priesthoods than words spoken to the worshipper; the pretended acts of magic and divination were needed to give power to the priest. In the Church of Rome, and in churches of similar spirit at the present day, the "word" sinks into insignificance before the other means employed to produce and deepen spiritual impression. The minister must become more than a servant, a διάκονος,—he must be turned into a priest, a member of a sacred caste, possessing, among other mysterious faculties, the power of forgiving sin and dispensing grace, and a power more awful still—that of creating the Saviour out of a morsel of bread, and offering up his body and his blood as a sacrifice for the living and the dead. The services of religion must be turned into rites, palpable to the senses, and fitted to overawe the soul; the chief work of the minister must be the performing of these rites; and the more complete his ritual the greater is his success; so that a triumphant climax is reached when the faithful on their deathbeds receive from him one by one the last offices of the Church; their souls being, as it were, serenaded into heaven, while their bodies, protected before burial from infernal influences by lights and litanies, and carried forth amid songs and prayers, are at last committed to that holy bed which

their ever mindful mother has prepared for them in the consecrated earth of the cemetery.

But the true-hearted minister will reject all such substitutes for his simple weapon, as not only needless but pernicious. In his work, influences that operate externally are to be used only in the most sparing way. They are not to be altogether excluded, for baptism and the Lord's Supper appeal in the first instance to the outward senses, and poetical rhythm and musical sound —both outward things—are employed in the simplest service of public worship. But these things are designed for the purpose of elucidating the truth spoken, and making it more impressive; they are not to supersede or to overlay it. "The word," says Vinet, "does not become a rite; but the rite becomes a word." The sacraments are designed to make the message more expressive, and its freight of blessing richer; but not to substitute an impression on the senses or an *opus operatum* for the intelligent and believing reception of the truth. The Christian minister is not called a minister of rites and ceremonies; he is emphatically a "minister of the word" (Luke i. 2). "Christ sent me," said St. Paul, "not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel" (1 Cor. i. 17). The baptizing was subordinate to the preaching, not the preaching to the baptizing.

If "the word"—the spoken truth of God—be thus the great instrument of the Christian ministry, it is clearly a matter of overwhelming importance that all intrusted with this instrument become right skilful in its use. If the chosen men of Benjamin have no weapon but the sling and stone, they must be trained to sling stones at an hairbreadth, and not miss (Judges xx. 16). Indeed, the great end of our theological training in all its branches is to promote a

thorough acquaintance, intellectual and experimental, with the Word of God. Apologetical theology vindicates its claims to a heavenly origin, and invests it with those awful sanctions of Divine authority which demand that it be listened to as the very voice of God. Systematic theology gathers up the great lessons of the Word, explains their meaning, shows their bearing on each other, and separates from them the elements of falsehood with which they are apt to be mixed up. Church history throws upon Scripture the light which comes from the great controversies of the past, from the various developments of truth and error, and from the contact of the Church with the several forces, physical and spiritual, which it has had to encounter in its chequered progress. Exegetical theology, besides furnishing rules of interpretation, examines the Word in detail, and brings out, clearly and fully, the precise meaning of every portion. Our theological studies would utterly fail if they did not bring back the student to the Scriptures, illuminated and vivified, filled with a clearer and richer meaning to himself, and more capable of becoming in his hands, through the power of the Holy Spirit, an instrument of spiritual influence over others. Such a study of the Bible is a study for a lifetime; and when it opens up in its true proportions, the longest liver has more cause to fear that his life will be too short for the study, than that the study will be too meagre for his life.

However little the world may esteem the arrangement which makes the Christian ministry so emphatically a ministry of the Word, those who look deeper will readily discover in it elements of the greatest value, so that in this, as in other divine arrangements, "wisdom is justified of her children." It may be

enough for our present purpose to point out and illustrate four such elements of value,—to show how, from this arrangement, the instructions of the Christian ministry derive—1. Authority and power; 2. Originality; 3. Variety; and 4. Durability.

1. *Authority and power.*—The Christian pulpit has never been such a powerful engine as when it has kept most closely to the function of expounding and enforcing the Word of God. The English pulpit of the seventeenth century differed from that of the eighteenth in being alike more Scriptural and more powerful. Whatever else may be said of the Puritan preaching, it was certainly preaching of the Word. It kept in the foreground the great central truths,—the fall, the doom of sin, the redemption of Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the solemn consequences of the choice which every man is called to make between guilt and pardon, between sin and holiness, between hell and heaven. Whatever variations there might be in the successive bars of the music, the fundamental air was ever the same; the communication came to men as a solemn message from heaven with which it was madness to trifle. That ministry, whatever its faults and defects in other ways, was certainly a ministry of power. But when the pulpit ceased to be a place for expounding and enforcing the Word; when passionless essays and exhortations to the practice of virtue took the place of clear statements of divine truth, and earnest appeals to the conscience, the pulpit lost its efficacy. In the eighteenth century, earnestness was deemed fanaticism, and a mild statement of some branch of the Christian evidence, or a mild recommendation of some acknowledged virtue, was regarded as the most proper expression of Christian zeal. But, as Dr. Samuel Johnson

remarked, men got tired of hearing the apostles tried once a week for the crime of forgery ; their souls longed for better food. In the hands of Wesley and Whitefield the pulpit again became an instrument of power, just because it returned to its great function of setting forth authoritatively the Word of God.

We are sometimes told, at the present day, that the scope of the pulpit is far too narrow. If by this is meant that preachers generally confine themselves to too narrow a circle of divine truth, we agree with the criticism. But if it is meant that preachers ought to give up preaching "old Hebrew doctrines," and to turn the pulpit into a kind of popular platform, from which everything interesting in science, exciting in politics, beautiful in art, and even amusing in light literature, ought to be freely dispensed,—we believe not only that such an institution would be a failure, but that the pulpit would then become in reality, what a German Roman Catholic called it in ridicule,—"the chatterbox." It is well that the pulpit should know wherein its great strength lies. There are Delilahs in the tent tempting Samson to part with his secret, and persuading him to allow a razor to come upon his head. And truly the Philistines would be upon us if we should ever forget our office as ministers of the Word, and be tempted to abandon those solemn truths which, uttered in God's name, fasten themselves to the conscience, and even where they do not lead to conversion, leave an awful sense of their importance, and of the madness of trampling them under foot. Far better no pulpit at all, than a pulpit that did not, as its chief business, solemnly address men as lost sinners, summon them to repentance, faith, and humility, and entreat them, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God.

There are several incidental sources from which we may gather further evidence what it is about the pulpit that lays hold on men and stirs their hearts to their depths. One of these is Christian art. It is a subject that has a painful interest, art having been so often abused and perverted to unspiritual ends. Yet it is certain that whatever power belongs to the masterpieces of Christian art is due to the degree in which they represent the great supernatural truths of the Bible. Art is admitted to be powerful in proportion as it is biblical, and when mere tradition becomes its basis, it sinks accordingly. The pictures that stir men most are those which somehow embody the great facts of sin and redemption. "It may at once be laid down," says Lady Eastlake,[1] "that the interests of Christian art and the integrity of Scripture are indissolubly connected. Where superstition mingles, the quality of Christian Art suffers; where doubt enters, Christian Art has nothing to do. It may even be averred that if a person could be imagined deeply imbued with æsthetic tastes and sentiments, and utterly ignorant of Scripture, he would yet intuitively prefer, as Art, all those conceptions of our Lord's history which adhere to the simple text."

It is said that the music of Handel falls comparatively dead upon a French audience, where religious scepticism prevails, and demands for its appreciation some degree at least of sympathy with a scriptural creed. Its power lies in the expression it gives to great scriptural truths.

If from art we pass to literature, we arrive at the same conclusion. In Titanic strength and grandeur, Dante stands without a rival; and is not the very soul

[1] *Life of our Lord in Christian Art.* By Mrs. Jameson and Lady Eastlake.

of his poetry the Christian doctrine of retribution—"the soul that sinneth, it shall die?" It is very plain that the mind of Shakespeare was deeply impressed with the nature and the doom of sin; it was as something much more than a weakness or imperfection that sin appeared to him; and his hell was very different from that coarse bugbear of the theologians which it is often represented as being. If we think of Milton, we think of one in whom the Bible was to such a degree a living power, that without his faith in it he would not merely have been a different man, but he would have been neither a poet nor a power. What a contrast in enduring power and interest between Milton and Pope! The one the incarnation of the deep Puritanic faith of the seventeenth century (without the Puritanic bareness), the other the reflection of the deism of the eighteenth,—or, as his Essay on Man has been called, "Bolingbroke in verse." We do not commit ourselves to the religious character of all these authors; but we maintain that any elements of moral power in their writings are derived from the influence of the great doctrines of revelation. Thus we may see that the very truths which the culture of the present day would explain away as mythical, or repudiate as barbarous, constitute in no small measure the enduring strength of the Christian pulpit.

2. *Originality* is another element of value which the Christian ministry derives from having to do so specially with the Word of God.

No doubt, the first impression we should be likely to have is the opposite of this. If the problem were stated thus—a certain book is furnished as the basis of instructions to be given age after age and century after century to the whole of Christendom, how long will it

be ere its contents are exhausted, and every new or original view which it can supply used up? The reply would probably be, that it was impossible that a single book, handled constantly by innumerable expounders, could furnish anything new after two or three generations at most. Every grain of wheat, it would be thought, must by that time have been separated from a mass subjected to such continual thrashing. But the case is quite different. To any thoughtful mind it must be a great marvel not that there are many commonplace preachers, but that there are still any original preachers at all. That out of a book eighteen hundred years old, which preachers without number have been continually handling, men should still be able to gather anything fresh or vivid,—should be able to construct discourses that command the attention of intelligent and well-read audiences, and to do this with apparently no more difficulty than their predecessors at the dawn of Christianity, is surely an intellectual phenomenon demanding some explanation at our hand.

Is there any other book in the wide world susceptible of such treatment? Plato, Aristotle, Bacon, Shakespeare —is it conceivable that any of them should be drained in like manner week after week, in all ages and in all countries, and yet should never run dry? Would the expositors never feel it a penance to be confined to a path beaten so hard by their predecessors, and the hearers to be for ever subjected to hearing the same names and being fed with the same food? The question, let it be observed, is not whether Scriptural preaching is never a weariness to any. No doubt it is. But to these persons all truth of the same kind would be a weariness. The phenomenon before us is, that in all ages and in all countries there are multitudes who

listen to the lively exposition and enforcement of Scripture truth with the keenest interest, and that there are preachers who bring it out as freshly as if it had come but yesterday from heaven.[1] There must be something very special about the Bible to account for this. Our explanation is, that the Bible is given by inspiration of God, and that it is as full of divine forms and germs pertaining to the spiritual world, as the book of nature is full of them pertaining to the physical. No age can exhaust the fertility of nature. There are combinations of her forms and colours to be witnessed ever and anon as fresh to man's eye as anything seen by Adam; and neither painter nor poet can ever be constrained to weep like Alexander, that he has exhausted the old world, and that no new world can be found to conquer. It is the same, too, with the Bible. Divine truth lies there in forms innumerable, and no single preacher, nor school nor age of preachers, can ever bring the whole to light. The more we penetrate into this treasury, the more shall we be enabled to bring out of it things new and old. If we content ourselves with an easy and superficial study of it, we shall of course be able to produce nothing but what is familiar to all. But if we penetrate below the surface, if we dig in the Bible as for hidden treasure, we shall never cease to find what is fresh and interesting. The most original mind cannot create truth; it can only bring to light truth that already exists, or find out relations of truth which have not been formerly apprehended. God's Book of Revelation is no more exhausted in these respects than God's

[1] "Novelty is a great means of interesting, and preaching can only maintain its ground in this respect by continually renewing itself. Men wish for novelty, and, all things considered, they are not wrong. . . . Every prudent preacher will bring forth from his treasury things new and old."—*Vinet.*

Book of Nature. It is to nature that the artist must look if he would freshen his mind—if he would get into some new line of representation that will fascinate and move the lovers of art. It is to the Bible, in like manner, brightened perhaps by the light cast on it by present modes of thought or action, that the preacher must look, if he would give fresh interest and power to truths that have begun to pall upon the general ear.

3. *Variety* forms a third element of value derived by the ministry from its relation to the Scriptures.

In reference to this, as to the last-named particular, the first impressions of many are different. The notion is apt to prevail that a strictly biblical ministry must be a monotonous one. And in many cases, it must be owned, preachers getting into a round of leading truths, and repeating them again and again with little variety, do foster this impression. It is a fault into which some of our most spiritual preachers are apt to fall. They deem it unworthy of earnest men, yearning for souls, to preach on any topics but those which concern, in the most direct way, the relation of the sinner to the Saviour. But in leaving out, as they do, a great portion of the Word of God, they are apt to cultivate in their hearers a narrow type of piety, instead of embracing in their instructions in due proportion the whole scope of that Word which is fitted to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. It is quite remarkable, indeed, how very small is the number of texts usually made use of by the evangelist passing from place to place. But the pastor who has to feed the flock from week to week and from year to year, must study to combine the conditions of unity in variety, and variety in unity.

No better mode of doing this can be found than by

trying to make the lessons of the pulpit co-extensive with the teaching of the Bible, partly in manner and wholly in substance. Looked at even superficially, the Bible is a book of remarkable variety. Besides theology, in the stricter sense of the term, it presents history and biography, extending often to the minutest details; devotional writing, bringing out all the varied experiences of the human heart, especially in its search for God; the proverbial wisdom of men in whom a rare worldly shrewdness blended with the profoundest veneration; typical representations of God's kingdom, of great interest and variety, if only we could get the right key to their meaning; songs and poems equally remarkable for their appreciation of nature and for the depth of their spirituality. What shall we say of the Gospels, the Acts, and the Epistles? The person, the life and the death of Christ—what a study is this, and how fitted to stir the heart to its depths! The kingdom of God set up on earth—what a wonderful conception! How solemnizing to think of this divine creation being in the midst of us, and of our being citizens of it, with all its holy rules of living, and of the immediate relation of every member of it to the Divine King! Look across any part of the Bible, and passages of quite divine beauty are sure to meet your eye. Take Genesis, the oldest book of all, with its first articulate utterance of the divine voice, "Let there be light;"—fit word to herald all the rest,—morning star, as it were, of "the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." The happy garden, the cursed temptation, the fall, the expulsion, the promise; the contrasted characters and dismal tragedy of Cain and Abel; the gloom of a growing corruption relieved by the bright star of Enoch; the flood, the destruction of all flesh, the salva-

tion of the elect family, the bow in the cloud, the fall and shame even of the chosen patriarch; the rebellion of Babel and its memorable punishment; the rise of the great empires on the banks of the Euphrates and the Nile; the call of Abram, the chequered lives of the pilgrim-fathers, the prophetic blessing of the dying Jacob, the romantic fulfilment of Joseph's dreams, and the curtain falling on the embalmed remains that could rest nowhere but in the land of holy promise.

To master all the treasures of the Bible, to blend all its voices into a harmonious whole, is no easy attainment. Though one great line of doctrine runs through Scripture, it has its diversities, like the parts of a musical harmony. Superficial men are ever finding contradictions where the profounder student will find a remarkable balance and agreement. To preserve this balance, we must follow the manifoldness of Scripture, and not confine ourselves to certain favourite lines. We must have breadth as well as intensity in our teaching, otherwise we may foster a feverish life which will be followed by a time of reaction and dreary lifelessness. The history of the Christian Church is too full of such cases. Eager to uphold some great truth which has been the object of assault, the teachers of the Church have sometimes suffered other truths, forming its true complement and balance, to drop out of view. Meanwhile a craving has arisen in some hearts for the nourishment to be derived from these neglected truths; exaggeration in one direction and disparagement in another have followed, till some lamentable schism and most painful strife have completed the process. There is something in the very nature of divine truth, and its solemn bearing on eternal life and death, that renders good men liable to exaggerate, and to show excited

and feverish energy in defending treasures of such inestimable value. The safeguard against such extremes would undoubtedly be if our pulpits were exponents of the whole counsel of God, and our pastors wise and faithful stewards, able to give to all their Master's household a portion of meat in due season. If only we could grasp the whole of Scripture, and at the same time wisely apprehend the whole wants of the Church and of the world; if we could bring the truth to bear first of all on the individual soul in its relation to God, guiding it to the great salvation, and ministering to it through all the changeful experiences of its spiritual history; then on the body of Christians, united in the fellowship of the Church; then on the Church in its relation to the world, teaching it to love the men who are of the world with a divine love, yet on no account to be conformed to their spirit;—if we could use for these ends all the varied elements of Scripture, we should not have to feel, as, alas! we do now, how far off the bright consummation is,—how remote the fulfilment of the petition, "Thy kingdom come."

4. A fourth element of value derived by the Christian ministry from its connexion with Holy Scripture is—*Durability.*

We use this word in a double application—we mean that provision is made both for the endurance of the institution itself, and for the permanence of its impression on men's minds.

The Christian ministry has a singular vitality. Schools of philosophy, once full of life, have died away; bright popular enterprises, like that of chivalry, have come and gone; institutions for the advancement of art and science, guilds for the benefit of trade, mechanics' institutes, people's colleges, and what not,

have tried to strike their roots into the deep soil of our social life without more than partial and transitory success. The Christian ministry has fared otherwise. We do not refer now to what calls itself the Christian priesthood, which depends for its endurance on quite another set of conditions. We speak of an institution which claims no magical powers, but stands out before the world simply as the pillar and ground of the truth. What chance of permanence would the Church have, if, severing herself from special connexion with the revealed message of God, she were to become a mere agent of Christian civilisation and improvement? If her churches were to become lecture-rooms and opera houses, and instead of showing to men the way of salvation, she were to show them experiments in chemistry, and to regale their ears with songs and jokes? Clever men like Professor Huxley may no doubt draw audiences for a time on Sunday evenings to hear expositions of the physical basis of life, illustrated by means of a black-board and a piece of chalk, and interspersed with snatches of music; but what hold can such things take of the masses, or what chance of endurance can they have? What insurance company would guarantee their survivance beyond a single generation? Like those trees whose roots run along the surface of the ground, such institutions can have but a short and fitful existence; and never can you expect to see in connexion with them what you see so often under the Christian ministry, the steady crowded congregation assembling from age to age, the children taking the place of their fathers, their attachments becoming stronger, their sympathies deeper with advancing years. To give to the Christian ministry its vital attachments, it must be plainly in connexion with the saving truth

of God, affording ground for the conviction expressed by the poor maiden of Philippi—"These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation" (Acts xvi. 17).

And as this connexion is necessary for the permanence of the institution, so it is also for the endurance of any impressions that may be made by it. If the clergy aimed only at setting forth such views of truth and duty as have commended themselves to their own minds, they no doubt might have a number of attached and admiring hearers, but their words could not sink very deep or turn the current of many lives. The echoes would not live as do the echoes of many a scriptural sermon, slumbering perhaps while life flows smoothly, but awaking in the day of trial, and comforting the soul in the hour of death. If we would preach sermons of such a kind as to arrest the conscience and turn the will, we must fill them with the Word of God. It is the enduring effect of such teaching, in contrast with the transitory impression of what is merely of human origin that St. Peter thus describes:—"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

These views of the sources of pulpit efficacy are the more worthy of consideration because of the tendency of some preachers at the present day, both in this country and America, to appeal for the authority of what they say not to the Word of God, but to the reason of their hearers—their sense of what is right and

fit, their innate perception of truth and duty. Some of these preachers are earnest, serious, and practical, without being very distinctly evangelical. One feature of their preaching is most worthy of imitation—they recognise the actual thoughts and feelings of their hearers ; they address them, not as men in the abstract, not merely as their fathers and grandfathers may have been, but as they have become and are under the special influences of the age. At the same time there is often a great defect in this preaching. It does not come home with the authoritative ring of a "Thus saith the Lord." No doubt, it professes to utter truth, and all truth is God's truth, and therefore in a sense God's message ; but it does not appeal to God's authority as given in his Word, nor constrain the submission which comes from hearing God's voice. Men are constituted in a sense their own guides, their own lawgivers, and their own rulers ; and the degree of their deference to such authority cannot rise much above the authority itself. The desirable thing would be to combine the old appeal to the Word of God with that frank recognition of man's actual thoughts and feelings which this class of preachers make so copiously. It is a great duty to commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God ; but whatever support we seek to derive for our lessons from the conscience must be secondary to that which we draw from our great standard—the written Word of the Lord.

Some will no doubt complain that this is the way to produce intolerant preachers, and that no men are so offensive in their intolerance as those who claim that all their views are identical with the Word of God. But where there is real ground for this offensiveness, it arises from this claim being made in reference to lesser

matters on which the Bible gives no direct utterance. If the Bible really is a message from God on the great matters of sin and salvation, he must be a poor messenger who has no definite conception of the substance of the message, and allows men to accept or reject it according as they like it or no.

To preach with power and effect, it is plain that the Christian minister must be in deep sympathy with the Lord of the Bible, habitually thinking, as it were, his very thoughts and breathing his feelings. Divine truth digested into the substance of his spiritual being, and reproduced as if it were part of himself goes to the heart of his hearers with all the power of a divine message, and with all the freshness of a human experience. A church replenished with such a race of ministers stands in no danger of extinction; her path will be that of the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

CHAPTER II.

THE CALL TO THE MINISTRY.

Of the New Testament ministry it may be said as really as of the Old Testament priesthood—"No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron" (Heb. v. 4). But the manner of the call is widely and obviously different. The call to the priesthood came through hereditary descent—it ran in the blood; but in the New Testament we find no trace of any such arrangement as applicable to the Christian Church. The manner in which men are called to the New Testament ministry corresponds to the nature of the New Testament dispensation. The evidences of this call are internal rather than external; they are to be found in inward qualifications, not in outward distinctions. Our theory of the ministry is that the existence of the qualifications is the foundation of the title to the office; that it lies with the applicant and the Church jointly to determine whether he has this title; and that when the Church ordains a man to the ministry, she proceeds on the principle that as he appears from his qualifications to have been called to the office by the Lord, he ought to be solemnly invested with it by man. The Church, however, is often not in circumstances to come to a very clear judgment on the

question whether such and such a man has really received a call from the Lord to enter into His public service; all the more therefore it is incumbent on applicants to be very careful in this matter, faithfully applying the rule—"Let a man examine himself."

While this lecture shall be occupied chiefly with considerations for the settlement of the personal question, we desire emphatically to lay down the position, that, however clearly it may seem to an individual that he has the Master's call, the approval and ordination of the Church are ordinarily necessary to constitute the ministerial office. Great evil has arisen in the discussion of this subject from looking only at one side of a question which undoubtedly has two sides. Some look exclusively at the *inward* qualifications, and hold that if a man has these, the approval and ordination of the Church are worthless; others hold that if a man has the approval and ordination of the Church, he is a true and authorized minister, let his personal qualifications be what they may. The latter is no doubt by far the more dangerous error; but there is danger, too, in the other. The latter would invest some men with the character of Christ's ambassadors, whom he never sent, and never could have sent, because they are evidently destitute of his spirit, and "if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." The other would allow men to assume the ministerial office without any check on their own judgment of their fitness—thus encouraging the rough and forward, and discouraging the self-distrustful and humble, and doing away with all that comely order which the Head of the Church esteems so highly. The true view is that which combines both, holding that the thing of real value—that which constitutes the real foundation of a call to the ministry—is

personal qualification; but that, in ordinary circumstances at least, there must be a trying of the spirits and a judgment on their qualifications by the Church, in order to the constitution of the ministerial office. On this footing we proceed to investigate the subject.

It is of great importance to accustom our minds to the idea of a true personal relation between the Christian minister and the Lord Jesus Christ. This, in fact, is implied (1.) in the very *name;* a minister, servant, διάκονος, must hold a personal relation to a master; an ambassador must be appointed to his office by the person whom he represents; an under-shepherd must receive the portion of the flock for which he is to care from the hands of the Chief Shepherd. (2.) It is implied, further, in the nature of the *work* to be done; the establishment of Christ's kingdom is a great, connected scheme, in which each part of the work bears on the rest; the building of the spiritual temple is carried on in conformity to a comprehensive plan; and though men may work who are not called, and their work may be overruled for good, yet the true and authorized workmen will evidently be subject to the call and instructions of the Master Builder. (3.) It is implied in the fact that efficient ministers are represented as the *gifts* of the Lord to those portions of the vineyard that enjoy their services. "I will *give* them pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed them with knowledge and understanding" (Jer. iii. 15). "When he ascended up on high he led captivity captive, and *gave gifts* to men, . . . and he *gave* some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph. iv. 8, 11, 12). (4.) It is

implied in the analogical case of the Old Testament prophets, who were called by God to their mission—"Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations" (Jer. i. 5); while of unauthorized prophets it is said, "I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran; I have not spoken unto them, yet they prophesied" (Jer. xxiii. 21). (5.) It is implied further in the analogy of the apostles, all of whom were called by Christ and sent by Christ—"As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world" (John xvii. 18). (6.) And finally, it is implied in the promises made to Christ's ministers. "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things" (John xiv. 26). "When the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Pet. v. 4).

It is important that such views as these of the relation between Christ and his ministers, and the appointment they hold from him be attentively considered, as some are disposed to regard the idea of a divine call to the ministry as a fanatical one, unworthy of the consideration of sober minds. But if the Head of the Church knows his sheep and calls them by name, it is obvious he must know his shepherds; and if even the foremost of the apostles could not be intrusted with feeding the sheep and tending the lambs till he had three times answered a question relating to his personal state, it is not only not unworthy of the attention of candidates for the ministry, but eminently the reverse, to inquire whether this office of shepherd is designed by their Lord for them. It is an inquiry relating to a matter of fact, and on the answer to it must depend a

great question of right or wrong. If a man who consciously is not called assume the office, no sanction that may be given to him by a fallible church can reverse the fact, and make him a true shepherd of Christ's sheep. His career must be unblessed, unhallowed,—a profane handling of sacred things, the intrusion of a thief and a robber into the sheepfold, to whose voice the sheep will not listen. How soon to such a man, when the first feeling of novelty is past, will the ministry in its true functions be a burden and a weariness! How sorely will he be tempted to make it a mere platform for benevolence, or a theatre for self-display, or to add to it some more sprightly occupation, instead of keeping to Christ's grand object,—building up the kingdom which is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. And how distressing his influence on the flock, guiding them not to the green pastures and still waters, but to the dry places of the wilderness—mountains where there is no dew, neither the rain falleth upon them.

The common application of the words "calling" and "vocation" to men's ordinary occupations shows that even there, in virtue of certain considerations, some men are providentially designed for particular modes of life. These considerations have a certain typical resemblance to those which determine a call to the Christian ministry. A person is understood to have a vocation to a profession or pursuit when three elements are combined—*inclination*, *ability*, and *opportunity*,—and the more decidedly that these all point to that particular pursuit, the more clear is his vocation. A man with *ability* to be an artist, with a *passion* for art, with the *opportunity* of learning and prosecuting the profession, may be held to have a calling to it, subject, of course, to the

risk of error under the head of ability, which must at first be problematical, and to difficulties under the head of opportunity, which, however, may be designed only to call forth the energy and resoluteness of his character. If we give a full scriptural interpretation to the terms, it may be sufficient to say that these three elements, inclination, ability, and opportunity constitute a call to the Christian ministry.

But we must not leave the matter in this vague form, since these terms may be understood in a variety of ways. For example, *inclination*. Ministerial life may be attractive to young persons of particular temperament in some of its secondary aspects; they may have a liking for a life of quiet usefulness; their literary tastes may be attracted by the clergyman's little study and theological library; they may have a personal liking for some who are engaged in the pursuit; or they may feel that, more than any other, it fulfils their ideal of a desirable life. Their *ability* may have been tested by the usual methods in their preparatory classes, and by the crowning evidence of their having passed the final examinations with *éclat*. Their *opportunity* may have been determined so far by the absence of any other pursuit which it would have been natural for them to follow, by the encouragement and approval of their friends, and by that spirit which in manly bosoms disdains to bargain for place or patronage, but trusts to realize its fitting position in a fair competition with the racers at large. Now there are no doubt instances, not a few, of young men entering on preparation for the ministry with views as indefinite as these, who, either in the course of their studies, or in their first grappling with the difficulties of the ministry, have been led to a far more profound sense of its responsi-

bilities, and have proved themselves to be able and successful ministers of Jesus Christ. Not seldom a man, while sitting in his place in divinity class-rooms, has for the first time heard the voice of the Master asking "Whom shall I send?" and for the first time been moved in spirit to reply, "Here am I, send me." A man may receive his real call to the ministry after he has been formally in the office. But let it be understood, that whatever the grace of God may afterwards effect, a mere *leaning towards* the ministry, based on such secondary grounds as we have now adverted to, cannot be regarded as a call to it. It may be that Christ destines some such ultimately for high usefulness in that office, but with their present views and feelings they are not entitled to regard him as calling them to feed his sheep and his lambs. The reason is plain. In the ministry of the Gospel there is need for a man's *soul* to help the work, while in the cases that have been supposed, the soul has undergone no adaptation of the kind. The work of Christ demands a glow upon the spirit, a devotion, a fervour, arising from a deep experience of sin and grace, and the power of the world to come,—demands an active desire for the salvation of souls, not always to be found in those who favour the ministry as a quiet useful life. There are various forms of Christian philanthropy or benevolence, to which, according to their opportunity, all Christian men are called; but the philanthropy which is peculiar to the Christian ministry is the love of souls. It is in many ways important and desirable that the ministers of the Gospel should encourage, and so far as other duties permit, personally promote these various forms of philanthropy; but it must be clearly understood that these do not constitute their primary work, and

that an interest in them is not the specific qualification which indicates, on the part of Christ, a call to his ministry. The minister is the servant to whom Christ intrusts the carrying out of the grand purpose for which he came into the world. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world *to save sinners*, of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. i. 15). In all whom Christ calls to be his servants in this work, there must be found some fitness for it in this its highest aspect—a special interest in the salvation of souls, and a deliberate purpose to make this the great business of their lives.

1. Plainly, then, in the first place, a call to the ministry presupposes the existence of the great mark of a servant of Christ—conversion of heart and life.

It is not to be supposed that Christ would call men to His ministry, or the work of saving souls, whose own souls are not saved, and who are not partakers of that life which comes from the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. The order of his kingdom is, "Let the dead bury their dead." It is true at the same time, that unconverted men have sometimes been the instruments of saving good to others, and instances could be given of persons who have been led to the Saviour, and have continued to adorn his doctrine, while he who first led them had come to wallow in the lowest depths of sensuality. This fact may well make students of divinity careful in examining the foundations of their Christian profession. No one is entitled to assume that all must be right with him in this respect, since otherwise he would not be a student of divinity. There is no such thing as an *official* door to heaven. Whatever may be the way in which he was led, he must have given himself to Christ before he can be His

minister. There must be found in him that sense of unworthiness and emptiness which leads him day by day to the blood that cleanseth from all sin, which draws him to God, makes him hang upon the promise of the Spirit, encourages him to read and pray, and makes him earnest and unceasing in the conflict with sin and temptation. Carelessness in the keeping of his own vineyard can be no recommendation in the keeper of other vineyards; and of all men the servant of the Lord should be the last to lie open to the reproach—"What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God" (Jonah i. 6).

2. More than this, a call to the ministry supposes a peculiar sympathy with Christ in his great enterprise as Saviour, and a strong desire to be of service to him in that enterprise.

A deep sense of the guilt and misery of sinners, far from their father's house, and often fain to fill their belly with the husks; much distress of soul at the thought of lives perverted by sin from their great end, and prostituted to objects shallow and unsatisfying at the best; a yearning desire to gather the wanderers to the Saviour; a sense of mental refreshment, a seeing of the travail of one's soul and being satisfied in the accomplishment of this desire; a feeling that to help thus would be to apply one's life to the noblest purposes, and to reap a reward that leaves nothing to be desired; a fervent wish to be sent out by the Master on such errands, an eagerness to hear from his lips the command, "Go, work to-day in my vineyard;"—some such experience as this is one of the spiritual conditions that mark off some, out of the mass of young Christians, as specially qualified to take part in Christ's ministry. We would not exclude those who, feeling

deeply that this is the true spirit of his service, but lamenting their own poverty and emptiness in regard to it, are lifting up their souls to God, beseeching Him to pour it out upon them. We should indeed be most hopeful of such, knowing that as the air rushes most rapidly into an exhausted receiver, so the grace of God fills most readily the soul that is consciously empty. The Church has no such ministers as those in whose breasts the word of the Lord so presses for utterance, that even if like Jeremiah they should say, "I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name" (Jer. xx. 9), his word would be in their heart as a burning fire shut up in their bones, so that they could not keep it from bursting forth. Natural temperament —that part of a man which it is least easy to alter—may have something to do with this; but be our temperament what it may, we have little cause to believe that we are called to Christ's public service unless it be at least our aim and prayer to have his word so dwelling in us that "we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts iv. 20).

3. It follows that where there is a real call to the ministry, along with this sympathy with Christ in his great enterprise of salvation, there will be a readiness for those habits of life and modes of service that tend to its accomplishment.

A genuine aspirant to the ministry must have the power of contemplating what has now been described as the main part of his life-work, and of setting himself to accomplish it accordingly. Of course, young men at the beginning of a race cannot know experimentally all its difficulties and temptations, and cannot therefore have before them all the circumstances that would enable them to say intelligently that they never would tire of it. But

this is not necessary. It is enough that, so far as they know themselves, and know the work, and know the promises and helps that are available for it, their hearts go with it, and that, recognising this state of mind as the gift of God, they feel the necessity of continually asking Him to renew and deepen it, so that as time rolls on they may like the work better, and live for it more. It ought not to be concealed that the experience of life that will come to you by and by will bring with it temptations which you may feel but feebly now. To renounce the world and its aims and prizes, is often an easier thing for a young man in the free independence of youth, than for one whose position is complicated by domestic relations, and who is sometimes tempted to desire for the sake of others what he could quite freely renounce for himself. But, under any circumstances, an aspirant to the ministry must see to it that he is content, with God's help, to lead a life which cannot well fail to be one of much labour and self-denial; that he possesses those habits of self-command which shall preserve him from the snares of indolence and fitfulness; that, like Moses, he can turn aside from the allurements of wealth and pleasure, feeling that the humble path he has chosen has rewards of its own far higher than those of Egypt; that he has faith enough in his Master to keep his mind at ease, in the belief that God will supply all his need, according to His riches in glory, by Christ Jesus; that he has a special abhorrence of all those vices, such as sensuality, deceit, or dishonesty, a single act of which, openly committed, or disclosed, might be enough to discredit if not ruin his character and usefulness for ever; and, above all, that he is so alive to the necessity of maintaining this spirit and these habits of life, by daily fellowship

with the Fountain of Life, that they form the subject of his most earnest supplications at the throne of grace.

The maintenance and culture of this spirit is indeed one of the most important elements, if it be not the most important element, of preparation for the work of the ministry. Unfortunately, it cannot be said that literary and philosophical studies have a direct tendency to foster it. Rather, perhaps, the other way. Breadth and expansion of intellect they do give, and what is extremely valuable in education (for it is education itself), they enable you to use your mental powers, to work and control that wondrous machinery of the brain which would otherwise lie idle like an unmanageable ship, or rush about wildly like a flooded stream. But the spirit of consecration cannot be said to arise from either classics, or physics, or philosophy. Sometimes, indeed, we see students entering on their literary studies with more of Christian fervour and devotedness than they show at the close. It is of vast importance, therefore, that pains be taken, not only to ascertain the existence of a spirit of consecration, but to foster and deepen it. Your own private exercises of devotion, in which you must never allow the pressure of other work to lead you to become slack; your Sabbath-day communion with the upper world; your home-missionary work, so useful at this period of your career; your private reading, embracing, as you will strive to make it embrace, the memoirs of earnest ministers, and all else that stimulates the spirit of consecration, will serve, by God's blessing, to nourish this habit, and thereby make it the more apparent that it is in obedience to Christ's own summons that you are entering on the work of the ministry.

It must not, however, be supposed that an intense sympathy with Christ in the great enterprise of salvation, and the presence of all those feelings and habits of life which we have noticed in connexion with it, constitute in all cases, a call to the ministry. That they constitute a call to some form of service is undoubted; in the case of women, for example, where such feelings are often peculiarly strong, the call to serve Christ in some shape is unquestionable; but few females, however enthusiastic, fancy that their vocation is to preach the Gospel. To complete the elements that go to constitute a call to the ministry, we must consider what is peculiar to that mode of service, and therefore indispensable to the successful performance of its duties.

4. We remark then further, that a certain amount and form of *intellectual* ability must be regarded as a requisite for the ministry of the Word. There must evidently be a certain capacity of *intellectual acquirement.* No man is qualified for the office of the ministry (except in cases of great rarity, where other qualifications are extraordinary) who is incapable of furnishing himself with the ordinary branches of theological knowledge, to whom Greek and Latin are nothing but unknown tongues, philosophy a region of mist and cloud, theological discussion a battle-field of hard words, and the history of the Church a mere labyrinth of facts and conflicts, schisms and heresies, that no memory can carry and no brain digest. There must be some capacity to feel at home in such walks, because in these times especially, when speculation is so much in vogue, when educated laymen are often so much in need of guidance, when the library of every Mechanics' Institute has its complement of sceptical

works, when young tradesmen and ploughmen are becoming familiar with the infidel arguments of the day, it were presumption in any one to aspire to the office of a spiritual guide who did not know more about these subjects than his people, and who was not better qualified to discuss them. We say that it is only in cases of great rarity, where other qualifications are extraordinary, that the want of such a capacity can be excused. We can conceive men of such spiritual force, such power of making the truth appear as its own witness, such skill in attacking the conscience, moving the will and touching the feelings, and in such obvious alliance with the Spirit of God, that the absence of human learning would hardly be felt to be a defect, and at the feet of such teachers the greatest scholars might be content to sit. But men of this calibre are rarely to be met with, and when they do occur, they will either, by their extraordinary spiritual momentum, assert their right to be regarded as exceptions, or they will find a special sphere of usefulness of another kind. Let it be observed, however, in regard to such men, that it would be a great mistake to regard them as uneducated, even if they have but little of human acquirement. They possess one thing which it is the great aim of education to impart—the power of using their powers —a command over their own faculties—a capacity of launching their weapons with an instinctive certainty of aim, and with a force which is all the greater that the operation is so natural and so sure. Where a natural gift of this kind is consecrated by the Holy Ghost the impression is marvellous; but so far from proving that human culture is of little consequence in ordinary cases, it proves just the reverse. For that marvellous development and command of one's mental faculties

which such men seem to have as a natural gift, the great mass of men have to acquire by education and by practice. The enlargement of our mental powers, the capacity of using them at will, the ability to have them in orderly array, so that they shall not jostle nor impede one another, but shall multiply the force which is exerted by each, is a more important and valuable result of education than any amount of undigested acquirement.

Some measure of this intellectual ability is doubtless to be regarded as a qualification for the ministerial office. Some measure of intellectual grasp, some readiness of intellectual movement, some skill in intellectual concentration. And let it not be said that in thus dwelling on the importance of intellect in the ministry we dishonour the Spirit of God. The fact is, that from the Apostle Paul downwards it is men of great learning and high intellectual culture who have been the mightiest instruments of spiritual results. Augustine, Calvin, Owen, Baxter, Jonathan Edwards were all men of full acquirement and well-developed intellectual power. But their reliance on the great source of spiritual strength was not impaired either by the fulness of their learning, or the force of their intellect. They laid all their attainments at the foot of the Cross, and would have entered very cordially into the remark of Archbishop Leighton to a friend who admired his books, and congratulated him on having produced them, —"Ah," said Leighton, "one devout thought outweighs them all."

5. There are also certain *physical* qualifications which are not to be overlooked in judging of a call to the ministry.

Extreme bodily feebleness, especially feebleness of

the throat or the chest, on which the faculty of utterance is so dependent, is certainly a disqualification, only to be disregarded on the strength of an unusual measure of other qualifications. So also is a nervousness so extreme that it will never allow one to forget one's-self, while it produces a kind of mental paralysis in presence of an audience that makes a public appearance a kind of martyrdom, and renders one most helpless when one ought to be strongest. It is scarcely possible to draw a hard and fast line between that measure of natural shyness which may be overcome by practice, by courageous efforts to do one's duty, and by earnest prayer for the help of God; and that extreme nervous feebleness which unfits one for ever being a good public speaker. But it is certain that nothing appears to the lay mind more out of place than the appearance in the pulpit of one whose feeble accents and general helplessness make him more an object of compassion than of respect. And on no occasions are people more disposed to pass hard judgments on theological institutions and those who conduct them than when such men appear as their instructors. The public are but little in the way of accepting the lesson which an eminent man used to say that he could always draw even from the poorest sermon he ever heard—a lesson of patience.

6. And perhaps we ought to advert to certain *social* elements not to be overlooked. The ministry is a social office, and men of unsocial temper, who shrink from the company of their fellows, and instead of being disposed to let out their souls, ever keep them defended as by a coat of mail, are *pro tanto* disqualified. This tendency, too, is one which, unless overcome in youth, will grow with years, creating at last a positive repul-

sion between the minister and at least the younger members of his flock. To encourage his people to speak on religious topics, and to enter freely into his plans of work, a measure of frankness is indispensable; for it is frankness that draws frankness, it is cordiality that begets cordiality, that breaks down the barriers of reserve, and knits the bonds of brotherhood. Considering, too, how much it is his duty to "beseech" and "persuade" men, it is evident that a genial, kindly, persuasive spirit must be of eminent service—what on this side of the Border we call *winsomeness.*

Yet, on the other hand, seeing that the minister of Christ is called to deal in the pulpit and elsewhere with very awful realities, it is essential that he be free from all levity of character, from everything that would lower in men's eyes the dignity of his office, or connect paltry or ludicrous associations with the grand truths he is called to proclaim. By profession a peacemaker, called to aid in the work of the great Peacemaker, and often finding it his duty to endeavour to adjust the differences that arise in families and in communities, he has need of a calm and peaceable temper, and of that prudence which enables one to steer one's course calmly, without stirring elements of strife which lie around one on this side and on that. A morose, reserved, and surly temper, or an irascible and violent one, are therefore serious disqualifications for the ministry. For "the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will" (2 Tim. ii. 24-26).

It is quite true that some of the qualifications for the ministry that have now been adverted to are of secondary importance, and that the partial absence of them does not conclusively show that the person has no call from Christ to this office. On the other hand it is also certain that several men of true excellence have not only done no good service, but much mischief in the ministry, by the want of talent for public speaking and public instruction, by a feeble, nervous, awkward manner, by an ungenial, mule-like temper, or by a pugnacious, exasperating spirit. We are constantly hearing expostulations from persons outside against some of those whom we send forth to preach, but who are utterly unfit for the charge of a congregation. If young men only knew themselves, and knew their natural infirmities, they might do a great deal at the present stage in checking and overcoming them; they might learn a lesson of humility and watchfulness from the very knowledge of them; they might be thrown into that relation of conscious dependence on God into which Paul was thrown by his thorn in the flesh, and taught to prize, as he was, the ever glorious promise—"My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. xii. 9).

It would be matter of deep regret if these observations had only the effect of making any conscientious young man uncomfortable, of stirring doubts in his mind as to his divine vocation to an office which hitherto he may have been contemplating with unclouded satisfaction. If, however, any doubts have been raised, let them not be suffered to remain. In the first place, bear in mind that though you are responsible for presenting yourselves as candidates, and though that does imply that you think this is according

to the mind of Christ, it is the Church that is responsible for ordaining you. The ministerial office will not be formed till a congregation calls and the Church ordains you. But if doubts have arisen as to whether you should even offer yourselves as candidates for the ministry, then frankly and honestly lay your case before the Master whom you desire to serve, and pray that in his light you may see light on the question, whether or not He calls you to His ministry. Let it be frankly owned that on such a subject as this, we who teach teach through our own errors, and become experienced through our infirmities. We serve a kind and most considerate Master, who, if we but have humility and docility, will bear with innumerable defects, will bless our poor endeavours, and kindly lead us on, through failures and blunders innumerable, to a respectable measure of success. The years glide on with pleasure when we are doing his work, and contributing our mite to the grand result—the establishment of the kingdom of God in the world. Our disappointments and sorrows are comparatively bearable when we remember that they are shared by him who has power to place them among the all things that work together for good. And when the joys of harvest are accorded to us—when souls are blessed through our word, and living stones are added to the spiritual temple, the satisfaction is increased by the thought that he too rejoices, and looks down on this product of the new creation with even livelier satisfaction than he felt at the close of his creative week, when he saw all that he had made, and behold, it was very good.

CHAPTER III.

PREACHING A CHIEF FUNCTION OF THE MINISTRY.

PREACHING, or the public proclamation of the truth by the living voice of preachers or heralds, is pre-eminently an ordinance of the New Testament. Occasionally it was practised in Old Testament times; but as a permanent and universal ordinance it was the institution of our Lord. Enoch and Noah were in some sense preachers. The author of Ecclesiastes is called expressly "the Preacher," but it is a question whether the original term (קֹהֶלֶת) would not be rendered more fitly "the Compiler." Jonah, when sent against Nineveh, was instructed to preach the preaching that God gave him—that is, to utter the proclamation, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." On the return from the captivity, Ezra, from his wooden pulpit, reading the book of the law to the assembled people, giving the sense and causing them to understand the reading (Neh. viii. 4), presented probably the nearest approach to modern preaching in Old Testament times. In the synagogues the practice seems to have been common; and our Lord at Nazareth, first reading a portion of Scripture, and then giving an address on it, seems to have followed the usual practice. John the Baptist was expressly and conspicuously a preacher; but perhaps it was as the forerunner of Christ that he brought forward so prominently the

mode of influence which Christ himself was to establish and perpetuate.

Preaching was not resorted to by the philosophers or founders of ancient schools. Even after they had instructed their disciples, they did not send them out to public and populous places to speak in light what they had been told in darkness, or preach upon the house-tops what they had heard in the ear. Methods more select, and apparently careful, were taken to preserve and perpetuate opinions which it would have been counted sacrilege to fling abroad on the rude ears of the *profanum vulgus.* Nevertheless, the method instituted by Christ has proved itself far more effectual than any. "The systems of the wisest philosophers have passed away, but the preaching of the Gospel has continued, and so multiplied itself, that it more nearly fills the world than any system of teaching or influencing mankind has ever done."—(*Kidder.*) There is probably no order of educated men in the world more numerous than that of Christian preachers. In spite of the rivalry of the printing-press, the superior attractions of other professions, and the fears that sometimes arise lest the supply should fail, it is renewed from age to age; and the prophetic announcement of the Psalmist still finds its fulfilment in every Protestant country,—"The Lord gave the word; great was the company of them that published it."

In the New Testament no fewer than five expressions are employed to denote the employment of the preacher.

1. *Εὐαγγελίζω,* in the middle voice *εὐαγγελίζομαι,* to bring glad tidings, to declare the good news—with special reference to the salvation of Christ; as the angel said to the shepherds, *εὐαγγελίζομαι ὑμῖν χαρὰν μεγάλην*

(Luke ii. 10). It is well to mark the prominence of the element of good news in this leading word—corresponding to which, a tone of gladness ought habitually to mark the delivery of the preacher, as if he were bringing a piece of good news to persons in trouble. In very many cases the word is used simply for proclaiming, but without excluding the notion of good tidings. The corresponding noun, *εὐαγγέλιον*, is the Gospel, the good news—what old writers used to call the Evangel.

2. *Καταγγέλλω*, usually translated to preach, but sometimes to show, to teach, to declare. The use of the intensive *κατὰ* denotes emphasis and urgency,—"Whom ye ignorantly worship, him I *καταγγέλλω ὑμῖν* —emphatically make known to you" (Acts xvii. 23). "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, through this man is preached (*καταγγέλλεται*) unto you the forgiveness of sins" (Acts xiii. 38).

3. *Κηρύσσω*, to make proclamation like a herald—spoken, for example, of John the Baptist,—"He came into all the country round about Jordan, *κηρύσσων βάπτισμα μετανοίας εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν*" (Luke iii. 3); *κηρύσσειν Χριστόν*, to preach Christ, "Philip went down to a city of Samaria and preached Christ unto them" (Acts viii. 5).

4. *Διαλέγομαι*, to speak to and fro, to discuss, to reason—"He reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded Jews and Greeks" (Acts xviii. 4; xix. 8, 9; xxiv. 25), etc. It is emphatically used of the preaching of St. Paul,—as when at Troas he preached (*διελέγετο*) to the disciples, and Eutychus fell down, *διαλεγομένου τοῦ Παύλου ἐπὶ πλεῖον* (Acts xx. 9).

5. The word *λαλέω* is also rendered to preach, as in Mark ii. 2—"He preached (*ἐλάλει*) the word unto them;" but also sometimes simply to speak—"they so spake

that a great multitude both of Jews, and also of Greeks, believed." It is instructive to find the plain word for speaking interchanged with the other terms, because this shows that preaching is in fact just speaking; it is not essentially different from our ordinary way of communicating our thoughts to one another by the faculty of speech, the chief difference being only that which is demanded by the nature of the truths uttered, and the size of the audience addressed. Our Lord's own preaching was emphatically *speaking* (διατί ἐν παραβολαῖς λαλεῖς αὐτοῖς;) it derived much of its force from its being so, from its being the natural expression of his thoughts; nor, because he spoke naturally, did he seem to find difficulty in giving to his voice a tone suitable to the subject, or in moving all up and down the scale of emotion, from the gentlest expression of sympathy to the most impassioned utterances of indignation, or the most solemn denunciations of doom.

The ordinance of Christian preaching, to which all these expressions point, is nowhere very formally defined; nor are the functions of New Testament preachers anywhere set forth with the exactness which marks the regulations prescribed for the priesthood. The truth is, as Vinet has well remarked, that "Jesus Christ instituted little, but inspired much." Instead of forming exact patterns, like the moulds in an iron-foundry which the melted metal is to fill precisely, he gave a formative quality to the views with which he inspired his followers, by which, rather than by express instructions, the shape of his institutions was to be determined. In regard to preaching, it was left to assume whatever form should be found to be most in accordance with its two great purposes,—CHRISTIAN INSTRUCTION and CHRISTIAN PERSUASION.

Instruction, the announcement of the message, the communication to men of the truths with which the ambassador has been intrusted, must obviously be the first object of the preacher. In the earliest times, the wonderful facts of Christ's history formed the chief topics of instruction, and the Gospel preached was little more than a transcript of the Gospel afterwards written—an account of the marvellous life and death of the Son of God. With the progress of the Church and of Christian knowledge, it was less necessary to be constantly preaching these elementary facts; indeed they came to be assumed as known, and the element of instruction in preaching then consisted in the relations and bearings of the great fundamental truths, both as to what man ought to believe concerning God, and the duty which God requires of man. Some are inclined to say that there is now no longer occasion for the element of instruction in preaching; sufficient provision for that being made previously in the school-room and the Bible-class. But even if it were certain that the fundamental facts of the Christian faith had been taught there with sufficient clearness and fulness, a vast field for instruction would remain in the elucidation and application of these facts. The truths of Revelation are so vast and manifold in their reach and bearing, that as no teacher can ever grasp the whole, so no congregation can be beyond the reach, and therefore beyond the need, of further instruction in regard to them.

But while instruction is certainly to be regarded as one of the great purposes of the pulpit, it is certainly not the *terminus ad quem*,—it must be subordinate to its other great purpose—that of *persuasion*. Under this term we include the *moving of the soul*, by means of the truths which are handled by the preacher. His

duty is not exhausted when he has laid down his message, like a cargo of coal, at his hearer's door, leaving him to accept or reject it as he may please ; he must prevail on him if possible to open his door, admit his goods, and place them in safe custody under lock and key. Knowing the terror of the Lord, he is to persuade men (2 Cor. v. 11); to beseech men in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God (2 Cor. v. 20); to warn every man, and teach every man in all wisdom, that he may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus (Col. i. 28). It is this business of persuasion—this moving of the springs of human hearts, and bending them Godwards, that constitutes the great difficulty of the preacher's office, and leads him most to feel the insufficiency of human strength, and the need of the special grace of the Holy Ghost. But the more a preacher recognises this as the great end of his labour, the more successful, with God's help, will his preaching be. And the greater the number of such preachers in a church, the more remarkable and the more pervading will be the influence of its pulpit.

It is chiefly in the fact of its being designed for persuasion, that the vindication of the pulpit as a permanent institution of the Christian Church is to be found. If instruction were the only, or even the chief purpose of sermons, that end could be secured better through books, or through the recorded discourses of the best preachers, presenting the truth with a fulness, a clearness, and an exactness to which the greater part of preachers can make no claim. It is of the utmost possible importance to keep prominently in view that it is the living element in the pulpit that not only gives it its chief value but even justifies its existence. It is the presence in it of a man of God who has not only

received divine truth into his own soul, but who regards it as his great business to get it into the souls of his hearers. It is not the wires and posts that constitute the value of our telegraph system; without the living fluid that runs along the wires, all that is seen by our eyes would be worthless. It is not to present men with any mere body of divinity, however clearly stated and skilfully articulated, that the Christian pulpit has its being; but that the truth may be mingled with the warmest feelings of the preacher's soul; that he may use all his tact to recommend it to his actual congregation; that prejudices may be removed, existing motives stimulated, objections answered, and indecision rebuked; and that this living element in the preacher may be blended with a life-giving element from above —the living power of the Spirit of God. If this were constantly borne in mind, and if the actual pulpit corresponded to this ideal, we should have far fewer of those diatribes against it with which we have been made so familiar in our day.

Within the present generation the pulpit of this country has been exposed to rougher handling than usual. Something like a crusade has been preached against it, and as it is not believed by those who run it down to possess any self-reforming power, it is confidently consigned to the *limbus patrum,* as a fossil of a bygone age.

The objections to the pulpit come from various quarters, and possess a greater or less degree of virulence. While some would utterly demolish it, others would curb it or push it into a corner—making it endurable by making it insignificant.

1. The first blast of the trumpet against the pulpit in recent times appears to have come from the Trac-

tarian school. The objection of that school to the pulpit was that it tended to depreciate the sacraments. One of the later Tracts for the Times (No. 87) described the sermon-loving spirit as the offspring of a "worldly system," as "not conducing to a healthful and reverential tone toward the blessed sacraments;" and as "the undue exaltation of an instrument which the Scripture, to say the least, has never much recommended." We can easily understand this objection. It is the voice of the sacerdotal school, exalting the sacraments above the Word, regarding the sacraments as channels of grace *ex opere operato*, and substituting a spirit of blind dreamy wonder in reference to the sacraments, for that intelligent appreciation of the mind and will of God as revealed in the Gospel which the Protestant pulpit fosters. It is just what we might expect that when men take to sacerdotalism they should disparage the preaching of the Word. But in the view of the character and tendencies of the sacerdotal theory, the depreciating remarks on the pulpit that have issued from that quarter cannot but produce an impression the opposite of that designed. Nor is it any contradiction to these remarks that in some instances, and for some purposes, the sacerdotal party have had recourse to earnest preaching. In some of their mission services daily preaching has had a leading place. But it is preaching as subordinate to the sacraments and the Church. It is not like the preaching of the Reformers—not the preaching of which the sum and substance is "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." It is rather designed to lead to the Church and the sacraments as depositories of the grace which alone fills and satisfies the sinner's heart. It does not say, Come to Christ, in simple faith, that you

may be saved, and then join the fellowship of the Church, that your new life may be sustained and helped on; but, Come to the Church which has Christ to give you, and which will give you Christ and salvation when you show your desire to receive them at her hand. It does not say, Look to Christ, and your faith will receive the grace of salvation; then resort to the sacraments that you may enjoy that grace more largely and luxuriantly; but, Come to the sacraments both for the beginning and the continuance of grace; you cannot find it otherwise. The essential difference between Popery and Protestantism is here; nor is it surprising that under such a system the preaching should be depreciated which points every hearer at once to a Saviour in whom all fulness dwells.

2. Again, it is objected to the pulpit, and especially to the pulpit of Scotland, that it overlays *worship*, casts into the shade the devotional parts of divine service, and deprives men of what is the real, the truly precious blessing of public worship—conscious nearness to God. Men go to church, it is maintained, not to worship God, but to listen to man. The devotional services are called "the preliminaries," and are hurried through as quickly as possible that the main part of the time may be left for the chief part of the business—the sermon. We freely but sorrowfully allow that there is some ground for this objection; but it evidently bears not against the institution of preaching, but against the abuse of it. For neither in point of length nor of anything else is it desirable or necessary that the sermon should be such as to monopolize attention, or supersede the deliberate and earnest worship of God. It ought beyond doubt to be subservient to such worship.

It should go to form and foster those feelings toward God which find their suitable expression in acts of worship. If such be not its aim and tendency, it cannot be in accordance with the mind of Christ, and it is certainly not in accordance with any of the models of preaching which are recorded for our guidance in the Word of God.

Other objections to the pulpit may be stated separately, and being somewhat kindred, answered together.

3. It is alleged by some that the pulpit is unnecessary in the present age. It is an age of books and intelligence, and it is easy for men to get from books whatever religious instruction they desire, much more conveniently and completely than from the cursory and miscellaneous essays that are doled out to them from the pulpit. The state of matters was quite different when the clergy were the only educated men in a community, and alone in possession of the key of knowledge. The pulpit might be a necessity in such an age, it is no necessity in ours.

4. More than this, the pulpit is an impertinence. It is quite opposed to the spirit of the age. This is an age of independent thought and critical inquiry, while the pulpit represents an age of authority on the one side, and blind submission on the other. Opinions now are not given forth *ex cathedrâ*. Everything has to run the gauntlet of criticism. The head of the state cannot read a speech to Parliament but next morning it is pounced on, if not torn to pieces, by a thousand newspapers. The pulpit, with its one-sidedness, its dogmatism, and its freedom from public challenge and criticism remains the only protected article in an age where every other statement of views or opinions lies open to the four winds of heaven.

5. It is alleged that the pulpit is actually unworthy of the age. It is below the level of its intelligence and vivacity. It is dull, clumsy, unsuitable; meeting no wants, satisfying no cravings, either of high or low. Ever and anon we have in our leading English newspapers, as well as in other journals, a run of letters and articles uttering and echoing these views. The dulness of sermons is proverbial; but from time to time the proverb is renewed, with an additional adjective or two to give it force. "Modern preaching," it is said, "is poor." "The great majority of our religious teachers are feeble, incompetent." There has been of late comparative "failure, alike in the quality and quantity of pulpit power." "Preachers as a class have been degenerating; or rather, to speak more correctly, they have failed to keep pace with the general advancement around them; the strength of English character goes forth in other directions; the bone and sinew and muscle of the country's manhood are elsewhere and otherwise employed than in the pulpit, and this has been the case for some time past." "An enfeebled pulpit, occupied rather by *nice* good men, to which there is awarded little more than a conventional respect, has little to recommend it to the highest order of rising intellect as a sphere of earnest and ambitious activity." "By friend and foe a common conclusion seems to have been reached on this question. It is said that the pulpit has reached the period of its decadence; that it has ceased to be a great formative power amongst us, and that the influence it once yielded over the intellect and life of the nation is gone."

Such words may be held to express the views of those members of the educated class in England who are seriously proposing that at the close of the prayers

in their churches, there ought to be a pause in the service, to allow persons who do not care for the sermon to leave, without being remarked on as ill-bred or careless. But in England, at all events, the dislike to the existing pulpit is not limited to members of the educated class. In an anonymous writer we find the following representation of the bearing and spirit of a great portion of the working classes of England towards religion and religious ordinances. We say of *a great portion* of these classes, because we believe that it would be a great error to regard it as true of the whole.

"The people *en masse* have come to smile both at religious teachers and at the system they represent. . . . There is so wide a gulf between the clergy and the great body of our working classes in our large towns, the former possess so little knowledge of what the latter are reading and thinking about and discussing, that evil often results from attempts to approach our irreligious classes. . . . The tendency here is to settle down into a dry, hard, unimaginative secularism, pushing aside, with an impatient gesture, every claim that may be urged in the name of religion. This tendency does not show itself now, as formerly, in a menacing attitude; but for this very reason its progress and ultimate results are all the more to be dreaded. The comparative silence that reigns just now among our industrial orders is full of grave admonition. I wonder how many ministers of religion could answer the question, What are the working classes doing? What is the tone and colour of their thoughts just now? Those who know could answer in a word—*material.* I believe that times of agitation, such as those of the days of socialism or chartism are, in some

respects, preferable to the present treacherous stillness. Men at least talked and discussed then about something higher and more spiritual than strikes and co-operation schemes. Now, on the contrary, materialism in some form is that to which every thought is given, and every energy applied. Thus we have atheism in fact, without the odium of the name; and just here lies the danger in the present temper of the public mind. Formal, positive, organized infidelity is not the danger of the hour, though there is a startling amount of this in our large towns and cities; but it is a sullen, apathetic indifference, combined with an eager devotion to schemes which practically ignore all religion, that is just now to be dreaded."[1]

Such statements are made of the working classes of England, but the pulpit of Scotland is not exempt from unfavourable criticism of the like kind. A volume of 250 pages, published in 1863, entitled *Strictures on Scottish Theology and Preaching*, by a Modern Calvinist, is perhaps the fullest criticism of an adverse kind that has appeared. The writer finds fault with the tone of *stern severity* which in matter and manner alike characterizes the Presbyterian pulpit; the *abstract nature* of its lessons, dealing so much with theology, and so little with the actual realities of life; the ascetic view which it commonly takes of the world and all that pertains to it; its morbid dread of encouraging self-righteousness, by insisting on moral duties; its unreal and exaggerated pictures of humanity; its suspiciousness of the professions of men, and slowness to recognise what is good in them; and pleads for "a more consistent, large, and liberal explanation of the gospel, and

[1] *Preachers and Preaching.* By a Dear Hearer, 1862.

an advance in all those simple and natural conceptions of it that may relieve God's message of the crotchets and incumbrances which have rendered it, to popular apprehension, in no small measure nugatory and contradictory."

6. Before passing from the subject of objections to the pulpit, let us give a sample of another kind. It is not directed against any want of ability or power—the very opposite; but against a certain inward want in the preacher himself, a want which, though undetected by almost every hearer, nevertheless robs a sermon, otherwise able, of all *persuasive* power. The critic is Jane Eyre—the heroine, and indeed the *altera ego* of Charlotte Brontë. She is describing the effects of an able young preacher's sermon. "The heart was thrilled, the mind was astonished, by the power of the preacher; *neither was softened.* Throughout there was a strange bitterness, an absence of consolatory gentleness. . . . When he had done, instead of feeling better, calmer, more enlightened by his discourse, I experienced an inexpressible sadness; for it seemed to me—I know not whether equally so to others—that the eloquence to which I had been listening had sprung from a heart where lay turbid depths of disappointment, where moved troubling impulses of insatiate yearnings and disquieting aspirations. I was sure the preacher, pure-minded, conscientious, zealous as he was, had not yet found that peace of God that passeth all understanding, —he had no more found it, I thought, than I, with my concealed and burning regrets for my broken idol and lost Elysium."

In trying to assign their just value to such objections as have now been specified, we may dismiss at once the notions of those who think that the pulpit is a

mere fossil of the past, doomed to oblivion, except in so far as antiquarian museums may preserve it, along with flint arrows and copper-headed spears. Christian preaching is a divine ordinance, and it will share the permanence which belongs to everything divine. We do not need to say of it, with trembling hearts, "*Esto perpetua :*"—a voice not to be gainsaid has settled that.

As to the relative quality of the preaching of the present day, the state of the question is often put unfairly. It is not whether there are but few great preachers ; it is not whether there are very many extremely poor preachers ; it is not whether the vast body of preachers are very mediocre ; but it is, whether in these respects the pulpit of our age contrasts so unfavourably with that of other ages as to exhibit the evidence of organic decay. That the pulpit has epochs of unusual brilliancy, and that the present is not one of those epochs, may be quite freely admitted, without allowing that its vitality is essentially abated, or that the time of its decadence has come.

The answer to the objection that the pulpit is unnecessary in an age of widely-diffused literature and intelligence has been given by anticipation. If the pulpit were a mere vehicle of instruction it might be relevant, but not when the living and breathing soul of the preacher forms an essential element in its very *raison d'être.* So also we may dismiss the objection that the pulpit is an impertinence, as continuing an authoritative style of dealing with people in an age which discards such authority. If the preacher's function be to deliver God's message, not his own, and if he speak accordingly, he cannot but speak with authority ; but while doing so, he should take care to show, by his humble and loving tone, that the authority

is all his Master's, and that for himself, he is but the voice of one crying in the wilderness.

But as it regards the other objections to the pulpit, it is not possible to deal with them in so summary a way. We believe that preachers are to be found at the present day whose style of ministrations justifies many if not all the criticisms that have been adverted to. We believe just as strongly that there has hardly ever been an age in which the same thing was not true. When an institution is served by so vast a number of office-bearers, it is easy to find enough of samples apparently to justify any kind or class of accusations. But it does not follow that the whole institution partakes of the faults that are undoubtedly in some parts of it. How far the pulpit of the present day is liable to the charges we have referred to, is a question which we cannot settle here, but for settling which materials may be supplied as we proceed with our subject. One remark, however, in the way of caution it may be well to offer. There is a vast difference between criticisms offered on the pulpit when its origin as a divine institution is recognised, and also its great purpose for persuading men to believe on Christ and do his will; and criticisms that regard it as but an instrument of human culture, designed to help men onward in the path of civilisation. Criticisms of the latter order have little claim on our consideration; criticisms of the former kind, however sharp and serious, should be received with respect, and examined with candour.

But apart from the question whether or not modern strictures on the pulpit are just, there is an obvious lesson to be drawn from the fact that they are so remarkably abundant. You, students of divinity, are about to take up this divine weapon at a time when it

has fallen widely into discredit. You are about to use it for the highest purposes, while many are declaring that it is fit for no purpose. The credit of a divine ordinance is to be intrusted to you, and it will rest practically with you to show whether preaching be that contemptible device of human priestcraft which some allege, or the product of the wisdom and skill of the Church's Head. Surely, in such circumstances, you must be satisfied with no common pains to acquit yourselves well. And the obligation to do your best in this matter is all the stronger, if the number of "born preachers" among us is small. If we have few orators in our ranks, who by touching some hidden spring can open the heart and move it at will (within the sphere to which human powers are equal), all the more need is there for the mass of young preachers to make the most diligent improvement of the powers they have, and to seek, with the utmost earnestness, to become able ministers of the new testament. To be an efficient preacher does not demand the gifts of genius; but it does demand a most careful discipline of the mental and moral powers,—a thorough knowledge of the Word of God,—familiarity with the collateral fields from which the preacher's illustrations must come,—familiarity with some of the best models of pulpit eloquence,—personal fellowship with Christ, and much tender sympathy with men. It implies a careful watch over your own hearts, lest the breath of temptation or the chill of worldliness should unfit them for your work; and, finally, it implies that not only as a general habit, but especially when you are preparing for the pulpit, you shall plead the promise of the Father, that your tongue may be a tongue of fire, and your words words of the Spirit, and thereby words of life.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN PULPIT.

If it were necessary to vindicate the wisdom of Christ in making preaching the chief means of the establishment and extension of his kingdom, a sufficient defence would be found in the remarkable power which the Christian pulpit has wielded, especially at certain periods in the history of the Church. The pulpit has a history of its own; and the style of eloquence that has characterized it in its better periods is as well marked, as distinctively *sui generis*, as that of any other kind of eloquence. While no other religion than Christianity has produced an oratory dealing with the unseen and eternal, the Christian preacher, at many epochs, and in not a few tongues, has risen to heights which no secular orator has approached, and has stirred men's hearts with truths that have gone to the very depths of their being.

Hardly had Christ left the world, when the power of his institution, replenished with the might of the Holy Spirit, was remarkably displayed. Never before, except under the preaching of John and of Jesus himself, had such appeals fallen from human lips as those of Peter and his companions, and, a little further on, of Stephen, Paul, and Apollos. What was said of the winning manners of David might almost have been said of the addresses of these preachers—they "bowed the hearts of

all the men of Judah, even as the heart of one man" (1 Sam. xix. 14).

The apostolic preaching was not the less powerful that it was so artless—it was the preaching of men who, for the most part, had studied in no school of rhetoric or philosophy, and who had no skill to shape their message in words that man's wisdom taught; but who, apprehending that message with unexampled clearness, feeling it with overwhelming force, and leaning with unwavering confidence on the Unseen Arm for power to send it home, poured it out in the might of the Spirit, making the people fall under them, not by the power of man, but by the power of God. As to any school or form of eloquence, it cannot be said that they founded any; nor can we find more for our imitation in the apostolic model than its directness, its simplicity, and moral earnestness. Even at this day, a preacher marked by these qualities—an "apostolic" preacher, as we call him—exercises a great influence in a community, and if such men were only given to us in sufficient numbers, there would be little need for cultivating preaching as an art. But while such men are occasionally raised up, as at the beginning of great eras, or after a long slumber in the Church, or at the commencement of great enterprises in heathen lands, they are not common in ordinary times; and it becomes necessary to combine all the means by which the power of efficient utterance may be increased, and possession taken of every avenue to the heart of man.

During the second and third centuries there were few great preachers. The work of Christian edification was carried on quietly and unostentatiously, the discourses consisting of simple expositions of Scripture, or exhortations to steadfastness, or admonitions regarding current

duties, dangers, and trials. The era of persecution was not favourable to bold, aggressive preaching; the "Apologists" bent their energies on vindicating themselves and repelling the misrepresentations of their foes; while some able minds were drawn into the region of philosophical speculation, and tried to reconcile the revelations of the Gospel with the theories of the philosophers. In homiletical literature the second century is almost wholly barren; though some works remain, like the Pedagogus of Clement of Alexandria, that were probably materials for sermons. About the end of the third century we find more traces of pulpit power. Origen, who, with all his errors, gave the greatest impulse to the exegetical study of the Scriptures, appears to have done a great work likewise in elevating the pulpit. Not only by his own great powers as a preacher, but as the head of the catechetical school of Alexandria, he did much to give shape and form to the Christian sermon, and to establish that mode of address which has become so closely connected with Christian worship. The sermon came to have a wider scope and a more careful structure; and was directed more systematically towards the establishment of the faith, the explanation of the Scripture, and the moulding of the hearts and lives of men.

But if the second and third centuries were somewhat wanting in homiletical products, the case was wholly different in the fourth and fifth. The period embraced in the latter half of the fourth century and the earlier part of the fifth was one of unusual brilliancy, unequalled by any period in the history of the Church previous to the Reformation. The union of culture and piety, of great oratorical gifts and great earnestness in preaching, was the feature of this period. Such

names as those of Ambrose and Augustine in the Latin Church, and of Basil, the two Gregorys (of Nazianzum and Nyssa), Cyril and Chrysostom in the Greek, shed a singular glory over this age. The causes that conspired to produce this result were numerous. Christianity had ceased to be a despised and persecuted religion, and had won many devoted adherents in the highest circles of society, both social and intellectual. Christian congregations were no longer meeting in upper rooms, or hiding from observation in catacombs and caves, but assembling in spacious churches, to fill the pulpits of which demanded oratorical qualifications of a higher order. The revolting excesses of heathen luxury and self-indulgence had caused a strong recoil in the bosom of many a noble Christian; and while such men did not as yet adopt all the extremes of asceticism, they made a vigorous protest in their own practice against all forms of worldly indulgence, and boldly summoned their fellows to follow their example. The age, too, was blessed with many Christian women of intense devotion, who bent their whole energies to induce their husbands and their sons to consecrate themselves to Christ. There was hardly one of the distinguished men whom we have named unconnected with a warm-hearted female relative, who as mother, sister, or grandmother, had besought him, with prayers and tears, to give himself to the Lord. The instances were numerous of men of high gifts and culture, who had been educated for the profession of lawyers or rhetoricians, abandoning their secular pursuits and devoting themselves to the Christian ministry. Sometimes they hovered for a time between the monastic and the active life, and even when they abandoned the former, they remained unmarried, and practised no small measure of austerity in the regulation of their lives.

No doubt they were on the very edge of that morbid view of the world which afterwards developed so disastrously into the monastic system; but as yet the morbid element had not advanced much beyond the point at which it gives a very powerful impulse to self-denying zeal. When men of high birth and lofty character renounce the world, and, as the result of deep conviction, give themselves to the service of Christ, they are commonly distinguished by a spiritual intensity and earnestness beyond the common; and when, as in the case of the great preachers of this era, they possess high talents, assiduously cultivated, the result is unique, and a spiritual force of remarkable efficacy is enlisted on the side of Christianity.

Remarkable though the preachers of this period were for ability and earnestness, we shall be greatly disappointed if we expect to find their homilies characterized uniformly by clear expositions of doctrine, or by solid and satisfactory explanations of Scripture. In both these respects they were, as a whole, far below the standard of the present day. We miss greatly in them clear statements of the way of salvation for sinners. But in showing the significancy and the practical bearing of the great facts of Christianity; in rebuking the spirit that regards the interests of this world with more anxious concern than those of the world to come; in urging men to earnestness and self-denial in the great duties of religion, many of the preachers of this period show a remarkable power. There is no mistaking, too, the reality and sincerity of their appeals to their hearers. Their tone is intensely real; they are doing business with those whom they address; they are as far as possible from merely delivering essays or dissertations in their hearing. In

this respect, and as a corrective to the tendency to heaviness with which our preachers are so much affected, the homilies of this period deserve the careful study of divinity students. And if you have not time to become acquainted with many of them, it is easy to make a selection. Augustine will naturally be selected from among the chiefs of the Latin Church. Among those of the Greek Church, Basil and Chrysostom have long maintained the reputation of the most eloquent and earnest. The great preacher of Antioch and Constantinople, as is well known, derived his name, Chrysostom, or the Golden-mouthed, from the marvellous quality of his eloquence. Many of the best preachers of modern times have owned their obligations to Chrysostom; nor can it be believed that any preacher could be familiar with his eloquent and powerful appeals, without imbibing something of his spirit, and adopting something of his manner.

Between the fifth century and the sixteenth, the Christian pulpit had but little to boast of. On the one hand, however, there were not wanting men who preached a mystic devotion, or who urged the renouncing of the world, like St. Bernard, or the imitation of Christ, after the manner of Thomas à Kempis; and, on the other hand, there were missionary preachers, especially at the earlier period, like the Culdees of the school of St. Columba, who did much for spreading divine truth among the ignorant and careless, but of whose sermons we have hardly any remains. As a rule, however, the pulpit was feeble, and for a long time previous to the Reformation it had in many instances been wholly neglected, or if used at all, used not to proclaim the way of life, but to communicate to the people the current and absurd legends about the

saints. Nor is this to be wondered at. It was now that a system reached its full dimensions which aims at instructing and impressing men by a different instrumentality from the preaching of the Word. Ritualism, *as a method*, is essentially antagonistic to preaching. In its *object* it may not always be so; in certain cases, no doubt, ritualists honestly seek to bring men's souls under the influence of spiritual truth. But it is characteristic of ritualism, as a method, that it aims at instructing, or at least impressing men through services that appeal to their senses, and in this respect it is antagonistic to preaching, which seeks by means of the truth to work directly on the soul. The method of ritualism is very tempting, where the men to be dealt with are ignorant, and their mental faculties have never been roused into activity. It seems unreasonable to suppose that spiritual truth should be apprehended by such men directly, and the wiser method appears to be to treat them as children, and make their senses the chief medium of impression. It is forgot that there is nothing better fitted to exercise the mind and rouse its dormant faculties than the great saving truths of Christianity; that there has never been any community too degraded to be beyond the reach of these truths when the Spirit of God has accompanied their proclamation; and that the employment of the Word as the chief means of spiritual impression is the appointment of God, and is not therefore within the discretion of men. In point of fact, wherever external ordinances have been chiefly relied on as the means of impression, the mind has usually become stunted, and spiritual stagnation has followed. The dark ages were marked by the prevalence of ritualism, but along with ritualism there was the prevalence of death.

It was inevitable, therefore, that as a general rule the pulpit should stagnate, while ritualism prevailed. It is natural to find the authorities of the Church of Rome resorting from time to time to new sensational devices, in order to stimulate the appetite which is so ready to tire of sensational food; introducing miracle plays and passion plays, in addition to all the sensuous accompaniments with which they had already overlaid the worship; ready to welcome every device which could throw fresh interest into the services of religion. But though here and there a voice was raised in favour of preaching the word of God, such a proposal was systematically discouraged. The pioneers of the Reformation instinctively resorted to the method of preaching, and utterly distrusted and disliked the whole system of ritualism. Men like Savonarola and Wycliffe were powerful preachers of the Word, and they believed that that Word was capable, through the power of the Holy Spirit, of effecting all that was needed, to bring men to God and guide them in his ways. The Reformation itself was the result of a revived Christian pulpit. It was the preaching of the Word of God that made the Reformers popular, and that roused the souls of the people. Wherever the pulpit was set up, the Reformation spread, and wherever the Reformation spread, the pulpit was set up. Where the pulpit was most free, and was used most vigorously, the Reformation was most thorough. By and by the Church of Rome came to see the power of this weapon, and from time to time she has used it, both as a means of producing a diversion from Protestantism, and of extolling the authority of the Church, and the value of her ceremonies. But her use of the pulpit has always been somewhat restricted, generally in the centres of intel-

lectual life, among educated men who were becoming tired of her mummeries, and sceptical of her whole claims and authority. It is contrary to the genius of her system that she should place much reliance on preaching, or represent it as other than subordinate to the elaborate ritual in which she puts her trust.

The Reformation era was one of great triumph for the pulpit. Never was its power more conspicuously or more conclusively shown. The greatest revolution of modern times was in the main the fruit of this weapon. And if the preaching of the word had not been forcibly suppressed, if fire and sword had not stopped its action in France, Spain, and Italy, its triumph would have been still greater, and Western Europe, with but trifling exceptions, would have owned its power.

The preaching of the Reformation was a decided advance, in doctrinal clearness and solidity, on that of the fourth century, and even on the best specimens of the mediæval period. Compared with the former, it was more clear, full-volumed, and definite; dwelling on man's fallen state, and on the way of salvation through the sacrifice of Christ, as well as on the scriptural means of maintaining the life of faith and holiness, amid the trials and temptations of the world. Compared with the preachers of the mediæval period, the Reformers were more hearty, hopeful, and rejoicing. Living secluded from the world, as even the best of the mediæval preachers did—Bernard, Anselm, and the like—and subjected as they were personally to a rigid discipline, they were little fitted to proclaim heartily the glad tidings of free forgiveness; they rather gave themselves to probe hearts, to awaken pensive feelings, to wean from the world, and to urge the carrying of the cross. The preachers of the Reformation mounted

to a higher platform, and unfurled the true banner, the real Evangel, the glorious news of the Kingdom of God. In their lips the grace of God that bringeth salvation was no mere speculative dogma, it was the pearl of great price, it was the treasure hid in the field, it was the unspeakable gift of God to men. To press on them this grand discovery, to urge them to lay hold of this treasure and thus secure their eternal peace and happiness, afforded scope for the highest eloquence, and was fitted, indeed, to create an eloquence where it did not exist. There was thus a rejoicing element in the Reformation pulpit, such as had not been since the apostolic age. The ring of Luther's joyous nature was in it, and the melody of his triumphant hymns, in opposition to the minor key of many preceding centuries. It was genuine, hearty, earnest. It filled the world with its sound. Everywhere men were brought up out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay; their feet were set on a rock; and a new song was put in their mouths, even praise to their God.

The German pulpit, which became a great power under Luther and Melanchthon, has not sustained the fame of its early days. We all know how it was deadened and all but destroyed by the withering blight of rationalism. Towards the end of last century many of the sermons preached were on such topics as the care of health, the necessity of industry, the advantages of scientific agriculture, the duty of gaining a competence, the ill effects of law-suits, and the folly of superstitious opinions—topics of which some might well enough form part of a parochial minister's instructions, but which it is fearful to think of as a substitute for the great and moving doctrines of sin, grace, and redemption. Since the revival of the evangelical spirit

among some of her theologians, Germany has been more conspicuous for her important contributions to literature than for eminent service in the pulpit. Yet there are not a few names of great preachers, scattered along her history, which are worthy of the attention of the German scholar. Spener, the founder of the Pietists, who was preacher to the Court at Dresden, occupied in the pulpit the first rank in his day, and was in the highest repute for his sweet devoted spirit, and his pure eloquence, in respect of both of which he has been compared to Fénélon. Zollikofer, who died at Leipsic in 1788, was compared to Cicero. John Godfrey von Herder, famed in German literature, and Court-preacher at Weimar, who died in 1803, was an earnest and holy man, and his sermons are "characterized by solid thought, a chaste and lofty eloquence, and a deep religious spirit." Reinhard, Court-preacher at Dresden (died 1812), was one of the princes of German preachers; his sermons fill thirty-five volumes, and are full of most interesting expositions of the secondary aspects of Christianity, but defective in the great fundamental truths.[1] Schleiermacher, Harms, Theremin, and Krummacher may be mentioned among those who have attained eminence in more recent times.

It can hardly be said, however, that the German pulpit has yet attained a position corresponding to the extraordinary vigour and attainments of the German mind. We doubt whether German theologians have a high enough conception of preaching as the great method of advancing the Kingdom of God. Should they attain to such a conception, and should something

[1] See *Bibliotheca Sacra*, vol. vi. pp. 300 and 507. In vols. iv. and v. of the same journal will be found much information as to German ideas of preaching in an account, by Professor Park, of Schott's Theorie der Beredsamkeit.

of the old earnestness of Luther's days come again into the German pulpit, the most glorious effects might be expected; the German Church might become the reviver of the Gospel throughout Europe.

From Germany we pass to France. The phenomenon that presents itself here is very remarkable. In some respects France was the theatre of the greatest triumphs of the pulpit. The Protestant Church in some degree shared the glory; in solid thought and evangelical light and warmth no French preacher equals Saurin. Of Daniel de Superville, who, after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, had to fly to Rotterdam, Dr. Doddridge used to say, that he never met with any French sermons to be compared with his, especially for beauty of imagery and tenderness of expostulation. But many of the lights of the French pulpit were in the Church of Rome, and, what is rather startling, some of them were Jesuits, though but little affected with the spirit of their order. They approached as near to Protestantism as was possible for members of the Church of Rome, and, though the enlightened Protestant will miss in their sermons elements of great value, he cannot fail to be charmed by their eloquence, and often warmed and stimulated by their fervour.

What the French pulpit achieved in the age of Louis XIV. was due in chief measure to the example and influence of Bourdaloue. A man of high culture, yet earnest Christian character, breathing the æsthetic spirit of an Augustan age, yet weeping over its unbelief, profligacy, and hollowness, and feeling deeply the utter effeteness of the Church's ceremonial, he sought from the pulpit to appeal to something higher than the senses, —to rouse the soul and conscience of his audience. Disdaining the empty rhetoric of his predecessors, he

sought to express real and rousing thoughts in the most perfect forms of language, to make the most exquisite and finished diction his vehicle for conveying to the highest circles the unwelcome truths which they were so shamefully neglecting. Bourdaloue was followed by Bossuet, Fénélon, Massillon, La Rue, Fléchier, and others hardly less eminent. The pulpit became the great centre of attraction. "Around it gathered rank and fashion and royalty, and the greatest scholars and critics and artists, all equally thrilled, astonished, and delighted."[1] It was an age of singular brilliance, the age of Condé and Turenne, of Corneille and Molière and Racine, of Pascal and La Fontaine and Montesquieu, of Malebranche and Boileau and Fontenelle; and yet the pulpit held its own in the midst of all this splendid rivalry. But it was not like the pulpit of the Reformation. Highly elaborate and artificial, it did not address itself to the masses, but rather to an *élite* circle of cultivated men and women, to whom nothing is acceptable unless it be presented in the most faultless style. It did not deal so directly with the doctrines of salvation, nor had it the same joyous ring as the utterance of men who, having found the pearl of great price, were calling on their brothers to share the treasure. While it called men to tremble and be in awe before Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, it did not so clearly proclaim the grace that hath appeared bringing salvation. It was not free from that gloomy tone that always characterizes the devotion of the Church of Rome; it did not quite bring the worshipper away from the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, to the new Jerusalem with its songs of jubilee, or to the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

[1] Fish's *History of Pulpit Eloquence*, vol. ii. p. 4.

Yet we should err much if we concluded that this wonderful era of the French pulpit was not worthy of our careful study. Mr. Jay of Bath, who was so distinguished as a plain, earnest, evangelical preacher, but who at the same time felt profoundly that no legitimate means ought to be neglected by which preaching might be made more interesting and impressive, learnt French in his old age, simply that he might be able to read and study the sermons of the great French preachers. To make them models would be out of the question, yet from the study of them we may gain many collateral benefits. The emotion that burns in them may stir our spirit; the boldness and force with which they address the conscience may rouse our courage; the brilliance of their diction may enrich our style; their innumerable felicities of thought and expression may give us useful hints in the handling of topics which are never out of date, however different the circumstances of the time. But while we profit in these respects, we must go far beyond the French preachers in spiritual power; for they failed to arrest the growing corruption of the times, or to produce any such spiritual revival as that which followed the preaching of Wesley and Whitefield, and other plain but spiritual men.

The English pulpit has never presented anything so systematic or so finished as the French. It has exhibited a much more varied style of pulpit eloquence, sometimes excelling in the form, sometimes in the substance, sometimes in the spirit of preaching, and sometimes in all. The sermons of the Reformers were not finished compositions, but they were the gushings of full and earnest hearts. In the seventeenth century we have two types of preaching, one more characteristic of Churchmen, and the other of Nonconformists. In

general, the Nonconformists excelled in fulness of doctrinal statement, while the Churchmen addressed themselves to the practical ethics of daily life. In the sermons of Howe, Baxter, or Flavel, man is dealt with as a lost sinner, to whom the Saviour is stretching forth his hands, and he is urged to fly to him for deliverance from the wrath to come. In Tillotson, Barrow, South, and Atterbury, there is what we may call an underground recognition of redemption, but man is dealt with rather as a denizen of this world, where he has duties, trials, and temptations numberless, in the performance of which he needs help and guidance. What was once said of South, that his sermons were not Sabbath-day but every-day sermons, is more or less applicable to the whole school. Jeremy Taylor, indeed, stands on a higher level. But the tone of most of the classical preachers is somewhat cold and dry, and becoming more and more characteristic of the English Church pulpit of the eighteenth century, it reduced it ultimately to dust and ashes.

Yet there are some notable qualities in the great Church preachers of the seventeenth century. They had a great faculty of planning and arranging, often a remarkable breadth of view, embracing all the aspects of their subject, and a great power of clear, correct, and forcible expression. The evangelical intensity which they lacked found its place in the Nonconformist pulpit, which never failed to proclaim the high doctrines of grace and salvation. But this severance of the evangelical from the ethical element—the restriction of the evangelical preachers to the one, and of the church preachers to the other—was unfortunate, and helped, perhaps, in conjunction with other causes, to produce the miserable state of things in the eighteenth

century. When at last the Nonconformist interest was in a great measure stamped out, the evangelical and earnest element nearly disappeared.

But the extinguished torch was rekindled by Wesley and Whitefield, and the pulpit resumed its former power. The one element which they flung into it, and by which it became so effectual, was gospel life. Then followed the great evangelical revival of the present century, in which Churchmen shared so largely. Like the Nonconformist pulpit of the seventeenth century, the evangelical pulpit of the nineteenth has confined itself almost wholly to the doctrine of salvation—the soteriology, as theologians call it, of Scripture—and has bestowed only the most sparing attention on ethical and social questions, and on the numberless problems, speculative and practical, which the inquiring spirit of the age is ever starting. It is another class of preachers than the evangelical that are now discussing these questions in the pulpit; and in educated circles, while the influence of the one has been waning, that of the other makes steady progress.

But while the old types of English preaching are still to be recognised, there is much more variety, both in style and matter, than in any former age. And the question of how the pulpit is to be made most efficient is as important and difficult as ever. If only it can be made to combine the old evangelical message with the guidance which men need in the special circumstances of the time, there is no reason why it should not have before it a time of as great power and as rich blessing as ever.

The pulpit of Scotland has had a history of its own. In the early days of the Reformed Church of Scotland, and in the Covenanting period too, the pulpit was

a great power. But the literary remains of the period do not convey a just impression of the force which they represent. Knox, Bruce, Rollock, Rutherford, William Guthrie, Livingston, and others, were doubtless powerful preachers. The samples that we have of their pulpit work, however, are somewhat uncouth, rough, and hard to read. Hardly any man in Scotland of the seventeenth century—Archbishop Leighton excepted—was a master of the English tongue. The truth is, their style was formed out of three languages, their native Scotch, English, and Latin. Latin was the language of theology, Scotch of the people, and English of the press. It was not till towards the end of the eighteenth century that the English of Scotch writers and preachers came to approach in ease and finish what is to be looked for in educated men speaking and writing their native tongue.

The great feature of the Scotch pulpit has been its close adherence to Scripture, and its love of dogmatic and of Scriptural exposition. With this its greatest masters have combined a closeness in the application of Scriptural doctrine to the heart and conscience from which it is difficult to escape. But as in England, two very opposite types of preaching have developed themselves, —that of warm, earnest dealing with souls on their relation to God, and that of calm, sensible, ethical instruction. The former style may be said to have culminated in such men as Boston of the *Fourfold State*, and the Erskines of the Secession; the latter in Dr. Hugh Blair and his contemporaries. Seldom has gospel truth been preached with the fulness of view, the rich flavour, the fervour and the earnestness of Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine. Their preachings were evangelical festivals, and the feast was "a feast of fat things full of

marrow." But, as in England, the ethical or practical element was but little attended to. Dr. Blair and his contemporaries found a neglected vein, which, however little fitted to supply to souls the bread of life, was at least left unworked by preachers of the other school. It is the vein which is always resorted to by men who wish to preach usefully without committing themselves, or their people, to the distinctive doctrines of the gospel. It is much to be regretted that evangelical preachers in the present day seldom give it the place which it holds in the Bible; in its place in the evangelical system, it would have its proper force, and there would be no ground for the common accusation that the evangelical system is not much concerned for moral interests.

The weak point in Scottish preaching has commonly been heaviness; and this has arisen from a tendency to an excess of dogmatic and expository teaching, and a want of familiar fellowship with the hearers in the ordinary moods and workings of their minds. The preacher has too often stood on a pedestal, delivering his dissertations before the people, or expounding to them from the Scriptures God's dealings with men in former days; he has not so readily come down to their level, nor touched their actual feelings, difficulties, and aspirations, nor sought to deal with them as he found them, nor, taking them kindly by the hand, endeavoured to help them on the way to heaven. In his expositions of Scripture he has taken extraordinary and often wearisome pains to explain the feelings and the actings of the men and women introduced to us there; but he has only in the vaguest way spoken to his people of their own feelings, or exercised direct influence upon them. It was one of the great benefits conferred on

the Scottish pulpit by Chalmers, that while he laid a foundation of sound dogmatic and Scriptural teaching, he dealt with his audience as a reality and not an abstraction, and in all his teaching seemed to have in view their actual wants and tendencies. We have a school of preaching rising up in our day, not always the most orthodox, which purposely avoids abstract dogma, and strives to deal only with what is living and stirring in the minds of the people. The true policy is to combine the two—to combine the objective and the subjective—to keep ever in the foreground the great message which God sends to men, but to give this message not in a heavy, abstract, uninteresting form, but so as to take living hold of the people who are gathered before you.

It is an interesting fact that the most characteristic contributions of America to our pulpit literature have been marked by this feature of adaptation. To hit the human heart through some joint of the armour; to touch its actual feelings; deftly, sharply, palpably to transfix it with the arrow of conviction, so as to leave it in no doubt as to its being struck; then bring gospel truth in its more comfortable aspects to bear on it, in a way equally pat and pertinent,—is what an American can do as it is done by no other. Mr. Henry Ward Beecher is at once the type and the prince of such preachers. Popular religious literature in America abounds in papers of close, pithy application, compelling the exclamation, "Thou art the man." Preachers like Dr. Cuyler and Dr. Talmage get to close quarters with their hearers, and having pinned them to the ground to show them their helplessness, encourage them to look earnestly to the great source of help and blessing. Or, taking up the practical side of life, they point

out to them errors and failings that are apt to escape their notice, and ply their conscience with the obligation to conform more closely to the high standard of the Divine will.

It is a common observation that in the present age the pulpit is not what it was. And in one respect there may be ground for the remark. It has not the brilliancy of other times. There are not many born orators in its ranks. But the general average of pulpit power is probably greater than at any former time. In any case, the lesson for us is obvious. When less is given of the extraordinary, more must be made of the ordinary. Where the soil is poorer, the husbandry must be better. When there are fewer men of genius, there must be more men of persevering industry and holy application. When fewer men are given, able, by a holy instinct, to command the attention of their fellows, there must be more men who are resolved, by God's grace, so to improve every faculty that the message with which they are put in trust shall not suffer in its treatment at their hands.

CHAPTER V.

QUALITIES OF EFFECTIVE PREACHING.—OBJECTIVE.

1. It is too obvious to require proof, that the first quality of effective preaching is that it be Scriptural. The substance of the preaching must be the substance of the message which the minister has been called and commissioned to proclaim. The word spoken must be a transcript of the word revealed; the preacher must at once receive of the Lord that which he delivers, and deliver to his hearers that which he receives. For the preacher of the gospel merely to retail the truths or enforce the duties of natural religion, with a slight colouring of Christianity, would be more preposterous than for a teacher of chemistry to ignore the discoveries of the last fifty years. Obviously the backbone of the Christian revelation must be also the backbone of Christian preaching. Man must be dealt with as a sinner, and told, as he was told by Christ himself, that the Son of Man came into the world to seek and to save that which is lost. There must be no concealment either of the nature, the desert, or the doom of sin; and here, perhaps, is the point where the temptation to unfaithfulness is strongest; partly because it puts a strain on your faculties to take in the Bible doctrine of sin; partly because it demands much courage to pro-

claim it as something which you believe ; and partly because such teaching interferes with a certain amiable feeling that likes to make things pleasant, and that shrinks from inflicting pain and humiliation.

Faithful preaching must further set forth the character of God in its twofold aspect of righteousness and mercy ; " the Lord merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." It must draw the line between salvation by works and salvation by grace ; turning the sinner's eyes away from himself, turning them wholly to the Cross. It must dwell largely on the person of the Saviour, and the redemption achieved by the shedding of his blood. The great work of the life-giving Spirit, quickening the soul from spiritual death, and maintaining in it the life of holiness, must have a prominent place. The inseparable alliance between privilege and duty must be brought out clearly—the connexion between God working in the believer, and the obligation on him to work out his salvation with fear and trembling. Men must be called to lives in all respects well-pleasing to God, and required to maintain an inviolate purity of conscience, and in every relation of life to cultivate a self-denying spirit of love and goodness. This great body of truth must be pressed home by the solemn prospect of the great white throne, and the awful alternatives of everlasting bliss or misery that hang on the decision which men shall make.

Keeping such truths in the centre, the preacher may sweep round them in a circle wider or narrower, according as he deems his hearers sufficiently or imperfectly grounded in the great central truths. Taking the whole Bible into account, the circumference of its teaching is

remarkably wide. There can hardly be a greater contrast than that between the wide sweep of the orbit of the Bible, and the narrow circle which marks the usual limits of evangelical preaching. The majority of preachers adhere to a somewhat limited range of topics. Either it is that they are afraid to leave "the principles of the doctrine of Christ," though this is urged in the Epistle to the Hebrews, or that they fail to make themselves so familiar with other topics as to be able to preach upon them. It cannot be denied that there is great meagreness of ethical teaching, for example, in most evangelical pulpits. Undoubtedly too, there are forms of temptation in the actual world, there are antidotes to the spirit of unbelief, there are quiet resting-places for the weary soul, there are subtle incitements to the higher life, there are refinements and beauties of Christian character, which are almost wholly passed over by the evangelical pulpit. There are moods of the soul worn by sin and the world, with which some of our imaginative writers can and do sympathize, but which are hardly ever approached by the evangelical preacher. And when these topics are touched, as they sometimes are with remarkable freshness, by preachers who are not evangelical, or but imperfectly, it will happen that many inquiring spirits are drawn away from the great central truths. No man ought, in any case, to meddle with experiences which he does not understand, or to try to open doors of which he has not the key. But while he makes the cardinal truths of revelation his centre, he should try to make his circumference wide enough to embrace all that is embraced in the Bible. There is nothing to which we are more prone than a narrow traditional notion of what is comprehended in the whole counsel of God. Little can be

said for the preacher who fancies he knows it all, or who does not find on his right hand and on his left glimpses of unexplored territory which are continually inviting his research. Only let him see that what he does teach from the pulpit is truly the message of God, and not the mere fancies of his own mind. It is of immense service for him to be constantly recalling the fact that his is a message of life and death, to be spoken to men, "whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear" (Ezekiel ii. 5); and if in the delivery of ordinary messages between man and man, such as are now sent in thousands by the telegraph, fidelity is the first requisite, how much more when the message comes from God, and when heaven or hell hangs on the way in which it is received!

2. Next, we notice *clearness* as another great quality of effective preaching. It is plain as an axiom that no vivid impression of a truth can be conveyed to others by one who sees it mistily, and expresses it vaguely. "Fire low,"—says Dr. Guthrie,—"the order which generals have often given to their men before fighting began, suits the pulpit not less than the battle-field. The mistake common to both soldiers and speakers is to shoot too high, over people's heads, missing by a want of plainness and directness both the persons they preach to and the purposes they preach for." In Tennyson's "Northern Farmer" the effects of this mistake are hit off with remarkable cleverness, though doubtless with a dash of exaggeration. The farmer is dying, and is turning over his past life in a half-accusing, half-excusing spirit. Naturally, he thinks of his relations to the parson, and here is his statement of how he improved the ministrations of his spiritual guide:—

"And I hallus com'd t's church afoor my Sally wur deäd,
An' eerd un a bummin' awaäy, loike a buzzard clock ower my yeäd,
An' I niver know'd what a meän'd, but I thowt a 'ad summut to saäy,
An' I thowt a said whet a owt to a said, an' I comed awaäy."

The farmer would never have been content with this view of his duty if the parson had started like the great Preacher—"Behold, a sower went forth to sow."

It is related by an English bishop that on one occasion in his youthful days, on arriving a country church where he was engaged to officiate, he found he had forgot his manuscript sermon. In the emergency he could think of nothing better than to give an extempore address on the proofs of the being of a God. He found himself carried on with unexpected fluency, and at the close of the service he asked a plain man whom he found in the churchyard how he had liked his sermon. "It was all very clever," said the man, who had entirely mistaken the purpose of the discourse, "but still and on, I am of opinion that there is a God." Perhaps the preacher might have learned more from this incident than the duty of plainness and directness. He might have learned how unwise it is to agitate men's minds with arguments about what they have never doubted, and are never likely to doubt. He might have learned that for such an emergency there are subjects far more suitable than any question of natural theology, and more worthy to be carried in the memory and kept ready for use. And he might have learned that it is hardly creditable to an ambassador for Christ to be taken at unawares on an emergency, and not to be able to make a plain statement of the great message which he is commissioned to deliver.

It sometimes happens that plainness in the pulpit

is hindered through an erroneous idea of what is due to its dignity. This leads some preachers not only to speak in an artificial tone of voice, but to make use of circumlocutions for the very purpose of avoiding plain terms. I have heard a preacher who had some objection to call Jerusalem Jerusalem, and who preferred to denote it ever so often by ten words in place of one, as "the place which God chose to put his name there." I am inclined to think that this habit arises from unconscious unwillingness on the part of the preacher to come into near mental contact with the people—a grievous error, since such closeness of mental contact is one of the chief aids to spiritual impression. In other instances the use of unusual words is a wretched piece of pedantry, a device of the preacher's for showing off the superiority of his training to that of the common people.

But a fault of this kind is trivial compared to that of preaching on a subject that has not been clearly thought out. There is a snare in natural fluency, the fluent man being often tempted to neglect clearness and directness of statement and simplicity of method. He is tempted to dispense with that most useful, though often intensely irksome process,—getting hold of his own thoughts, ascertaining precisely what they are, and separating them from every particle of mist and obscurity. Perhaps he thinks it enough in his preparation to get hold vaguely of a thought, and trust to its clearing itself, as it were, and coming out with sufficient plainness, under the excitement of delivery. Far more may be expected *ultimately* of the man who, though at first he sees his subject enveloped in an impenetrable mist,—sees a fragment of an idea here, and the shadow of one there, and knows that there

must be a connexion between them, but is baffled, bewildered, and almost maddened as he attempts to define and express them,—perseveres, nevertheless, with the persistency of a martyr, jots down with his pencil everything as it occurs to him, concentrates his attention more earnestly, keeps his temper, walks about his room, is frequently on his knees, or with his hand over his eyes; possibly finds it necessary to take a quiet walk in a retired place, or to wait till a night's sleep shall have freshened his brains, or given him a better point of view; but at last, when his work is finished, finds an abundant recompense for these pangs of parturition in the clear consecutive form in which his thoughts come out. If we cannot but admire the marvellous precision, clearness, and force of the thinking of John Foster, it will be well for us to remember what labour and travail composition cost him, how very far the pen which *he* wielded was from that of the ready writer. Nothing can be more valuable than the mental discipline of clearing the obscure, and marshalling the tangled in our own minds; nor does it follow that the same toil and trouble will always be required. He who is thus resolute in his purpose to see clearly himself before he shall attempt to teach another, will reach a habit of clearness which by and by will supersede the necessity of the efforts through which it was acquired.

3. A third quality of effective preaching is *adaptation* to the capacity and circumstances of the hearers. Of all public speakers, the preacher has most need to cultivate this quality. An ordinary congregation presents more *variety of capacity* than almost any other audience. Persons may be found in it of almost all varieties of education, from the most

crass Bœotian to the most cultivated sage. The child of eight will be sitting side by side with the grandfather of eighty, and the babe in Christ with the mother in Israel, who, taught for half a century by the Holy Ghost, has been gaining wonderful insight into the things of God. One hearer will be ignorant of the very elements of Bible history and theological knowledge: another will possess an acquaintance with both, wonderful for his years and opportunities. The ability to feed the sheep and the lambs together, to write like the Apostle in the same letter to little children, and to young men, and to fathers in Christ, is a marvellous achievement of Christian tact and wisdom.

For enabling a preacher to test the capacity of his audience, it is of the greatest importance for him to come as much as possible into contact with them, by pastoral visiting, private conversation, and Bible classes. As a general rule, it will be best for him to adapt his course of instruction to their average capacity, and to make occasional excursions or episodes, as it were, for the benefit of those who are either above or below the average standard. In general, we may say that the more biblical any discourse is, the more will it be found to suit the several varieties of capacity. Our Lord's own discourses are full of instruction on this point. And many of them,—his parables for example, had this remarkable feature, that while fitted to interest all classes, even the humblest, they were adapted at the same time to give exercise to minds of the highest calibre, suggesting views of truth which such minds might find it most useful to ponder. And generally, the Bible, from first to last, will be found to be quite a model of adaptation to all the diversities with which the Christian minister has to deal, both in its general

adaptation to the average capacity, and in the portions which are specially fitted for those above that standard and for those below.

Let it be observed, however, that while a preacher must aim at hitting the existing capacity of his audience, he ought at the same time to try to *enlarge* it, to accustom them to the *higher levels* of truth and experience. Some ministers have been wonderfully successful in this way; not merely conferring benefit on individuals in their flocks, but educating the flock itself—expanding its intellectual and spiritual capacity, and enabling it to find enjoyment and profit in regions that would at one time have seemed dark as a mine or inaccessible as an Alpine peak. In such cases, the effect has been largely due to the silent impression which an able and well-instructed, and at the same time modest man produces of the reality of these higher levels, and of the precious deposits which they afford, by creating a strong sympathy with himself. He lifts them up, or excites in them the desire to rise, whereas an instructor who is himself content to dwell in the more common levels, creates no conception of anything higher, and inspires no upward desire. It is between two extremes that the true preacher must steer : preaching too high, where the people cannot rise with him, and preaching so low, that they have no wish to rise. The golden mean is to strike their original capacity, but carry them gradually up.

4. In all effective preaching there is an *arresting* element. It must seize hold on the actual thoughts and feelings that are stirring in the breasts of hearers, and use them as auxiliaries for spiritual impression.

It is of great importance, in this point of view, to get a common starting-point with one's hearers. This

is often furnished by special occurrences,—remarkable providences that every one is struck by; or by human feelings, common to most men, but that commonly lie, as it were, in deep rock-pools, seldom stirred by other hands. Very often the preacher will excite a wonderful interest by quietly using his own experience of sin and infirmity, hope and fear, joy and sorrow, of effort and disappointment, as the basis of his instructions. Few that have done so have failed to meet with illustrations almost ludicrous of the remarkable degree to which their lessons have struck home. A hearer will sometimes ask a friend with the most ingenuous solicitude, "Who could have told the preacher all about me? I felt that he was describing me to the very life." Most likely the preacher did nothing but delineate some common human experience: *e.g.* the disgust one has in certain moods of mind at some besetting sin; the vivid conviction at these times that one will never again fall into it; the gradual unconscious disappearance of that conviction, and one's horror at discovering by and by that one has fallen into it as badly as ever.[1]

This mode of rousing living feeling in the heart of a hearer has an effect on the mind corresponding to that of a touch on the body. Abstract discussion may leave a hearer utterly unmoved, as much so as if he were asleep. But touch such a person, even though his face be turned in the opposite direction; the effect is first a surprise, then a concentration of his attention upon

[1] "A man," says Cecil, "who talks to himself will find out what suits the heart of man; some things respond, they ring again. Nothing of this sort is lost upon mankind; it is worth its weight in gold for the service of the minister. He must remark too what it is that puzzles and distracts the mind; all that is to be avoided. It may wear the garb of deep research, great acumen, and extensive learning; but it is nothing to the mass of mankind."

you. So if you come into contact with a hearer's mind by rousing some living thought or feeling, the effect is first a surprise, and then a concentration of his attention. And for a time at least he is at your command, he will hear anything you may say. The metaphorical meaning of the word "touch" illustrates our position. A touching appeal is an appeal that rouses a living feeling,—a chord vibrating in your soul comes into contact with a corresponding chord in another's, and sets it vibrating too; and when the power is wielded by a man of much emotional sensibility, the effect is thrilling and overwhelming. Practically, this metaphorical use of the word touch is limited to the more tender feelings, and hence "touching" and "pathetic" are pretty nearly synonymous, as applicable to a discourse. But let the feeling be tender or otherwise, if you rouse it into life by what you say, your hearer lies for the time at your mercy,—he is compelled to attend.

But whether by a touch or otherwise, it is of the greatest consequence to a preacher to get his lessons associated with something that has life and motion in the heart of his hearers. A dry preacher is one that pays no regard to this law of interesting discourse, but is content to let the stream of his thoughts, if there be a stream, flow on, without an attempt to bring them into contact with any thought or feeling that is active in his hearers. A commonplace preacher, in like manner, is content to utter statements, not because they are fitted to lay hold of anything living, or give life to anything dead, but simply because they are the things that it is most proper to say on the subject. No amount of fluency can atone for this defect. A flow of words without one arresting thought may split the ears of the groundlings, but it is miserable work. Such

preaching can never stir heart and soul. It may produce a sleepy acquiescence, or a stupid murmur of approbation, or even admiration, but that is all. On the other hand, there are low clap-trap arts which some preachers resort to for the purpose of creating a surprise. There are men who utter *outré* things from the pulpit, on a principle not much higher than that on which the clown in a pantomime throws his body into grotesque attitudes, or wears a dress of motley. There are tricks of sensationalism, of which it is enough to say that no great preacher would ever demean himself by resorting to them, and which ought to be treated as the mean dodges of quacks, incapable of gaining attention by legitimate means. If educated men know so little of what is stirring in the minds and hearts of their fellows, and have so few resources for attaching the great lessons of Christianity to these, as to be obliged to resort to the *outré* and the sensational, it is surely an indication that they are unequal to their task.

5. A fifth quality of effective preaching is its making use of a *variety of faculties,* in order to obtain access to the souls of the audience. It is not content to gain or to hold possession by a single avenue, such as the reasoning faculty; it aims to bring into play the whole round of faculties by which the mind can be approached or influenced. In other words, it seeks to make the mode of appeal as varied as it is found to be in the Bible.

All of us have probably known instances of very admirable discourses failing to produce much impression, because from first to last they were addressed to the logical faculty, and when that faculty became tired, as in uneducated hearers it does very quickly, no other was called in to relieve it. Men who are trained to

follow the movements of the logical faculty may indeed find much pleasure in discourses where it is used almost alone, but used to excellent purpose ; few intellectual treats are greater than a piece of powerful reasoning, where, either by strong clear statements that commend themselves to our intuitions, or by more formal modes of reasoning, light is thrown on the obscure, and truths that lay in shadowy corners are brought out into the clear sunshine. But in preaching, even the most logical minds are intolerable if their logic is not steeped, so to speak, in emotion ; great masters of the art, like Jonathan Edwards or Canon Liddon, would be utter failures if the fervour of a burning heart did not glow in their discourses. Cold logic, like that of Butler's Analogy, is utterly unsuitable for public preaching. In common minds, and indeed it might be said in all minds, the imagination is of great service as a handmaid to logic. It is easily excited, even in the uneducated ; it works for a considerable time not only without fatigue, but with an intense sense of enjoyment. Appeals to the feelings are also very effective, when managed with skill and moderation ; but it must be remembered that if the feelings do not respond to such appeals, they are liable to become hardened, and if, being tender and excitable, they do respond, they are easily overpowered. The same remark may be made of the conscience. Obviously the part of a skilful preacher is to appeal in due proportion to all the faculties, just as we find them appealed to in the Word of God.

Take, for example, the Epistle to the Romans. There is noble exercise afforded there for the logical faculty, especially in the earlier chapters ; but that unrivalled epistle would have been a very different production had

no other faculty been appealed to. How skilfully, all through, are the other faculties called into operation! What a striking summons, for example, is given to conscience in the beginning of the second chapter,—"And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them that do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the righteous judgment of God?" Nothing, by the way, can be more effective than to wake up conscience by a sudden and unexpected appeal like this: as it is done in some of our Lord's parables, or in Nathan's parable of the ewe lamb. It is like the sudden uncovering of a masked battery in war. In another part of the epistle we find the moral instincts or intuitions brought skilfully into play: "If our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man.) God forbid; for then how shall God judge the world?" A little further on we are borne on the outspread wings of imagination to hear the creation groaning and travailing in pain, and waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body. And in other places our feelings are laid siege to and carried captive—"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" It is this variety of appeal that makes the Bible such a lively book, such a contrast to the productions of those who for ever address themselves to a single faculty, and are sure to wear out their hearers. The best preachers in this respect are doubtless those who with as little effort as is apparent in the case of our Lord, or in that of St. Paul, are able to appeal to the several faculties in due proportion, and to get the best work out of each. In no case, of course, must the reasoning faculty be denied

its own place. It is less shy, and at the same time more honest, than the feelings, which, if pressed too hard, will hide themselves altogether, or give, at best, but a one-sided decision. Direct appeals to the feelings are effective in proportion as they are rare. It is better to aim as a habit at moving them by sympathy; if the feelings of the preacher be moved intensely by what he utters, that will serve to move the feelings of his audience. Indeed, it is only when the feelings of an audience have been brought up to a certain pitch by this process, that the direct appeal carries the day.

6. From the preceding remarks it follows as a corollary that in effective preaching copious *illustration* is almost always indispensable.

The capacity of the human mind to appreciate resemblances and contrasts is one of its most invariable characteristics, and it may readily be turned by the preacher to invaluable account. It enables him to lay stepping-stones along paths where otherwise he could not hope to conduct the larger portion of his hearers. It lends bright hues to subjects which would otherwise be too sombre, and catches the attention that in cases innumerable would be sure to be lost. It is in this light that we speak of it now. When ordained to the charge of his first congregation, the late Dr. Guthrie determined that whatever he might fail in, he would compel his hearers to attend. Watching, in the course of his first efforts, to discover what part of his discourses seemed to be most attended to, he saw that it was the illustrations. He accordingly resolved to cultivate that department of composition with peculiar care. Cultivate it he did, and to the greatest purpose : for a greater master of illustration has never appeared in the pulpit, nor one who by means of it could more closely rivet the

attention of his audience. But the copious use of illustration has a higher sanction. Our Lord's own discourses abound in it. His parables are illustrations all through. The Sermon on the Mount has hardly started before we find the salt of the earth, the light of the world, the city set on an hill, the candle under a bushel, and the candle on the candlestick. In their most solemn and impressive periods, too, Christ's discourses are pointed with illustrations. The Sermon on the Mount fills us with an overwhelming sense of the retributions of the day of doom, by the illustration of the house on the rock and the house on the sand. The parable of the last judgment makes a similar impression, by the illustration of the shepherd dividing his sheep from the goats. Nothing could repress the outflow of illustration from the mind of Jesus. In the deepest agony of the garden, his sufferings were spoken of as a cup. The farewell discourse begins with the house of many mansions, has for its central subject the vine and its branches, and pretty nearly ends with the woman in travail having sorrow when her hour is come, but after the child is born, forgetting her anguish for joy that a man is born into the world. Probably it is not less instructive in another connexion, that there are *no* figures, and hardly any illustrations, in the *intercessory prayer*. God did not need them when the address was to him. But on the way to Calvary the ever busy faculty again asserts itself in the address to the daughters of Jerusalem—"If they do these things in the *green tree*, what shall be done in the dry?"

There is this further to be said in favour of illustration, that it is adapted to take hold of all classes and ages of hearers. An apt illustration is fitted to interest the most cultivated philosopher and the youngest

child. Illustration, in fact, is one of the chief instruments for enabling a preacher to fuse his audience together, and treat it as a unity. Some parts of a discourse may be adapted to one class, and some to another; but the illustrations are for all. They are the pictures of spoken instruction. Pictorial illustrations of Scripture, provided they be true, even if slight and almost rude, are not beneath the notice nor the interest of the most intellectual reader. And it is one of the signs of the times that illustrated works are far the most popular. Illustrated sermons are popular too. And where the illustrations are wanting, the sermon is like a tree in winter, or a skeleton, or the bare ribs of a ship on the stocks: skilfully constructed, it may be, but incomplete, and very soon tiresome.

Of course, the illustrations, even when good, and in good taste, may be overdone. Illustration may be so superabundant as to overlay instruction, and make the discourse illustration *et prœterea nihil.* Care must be taken that a good body of solid instruction underlies the more illustrative part. How wonderfully this was verified in the discourses of our Lord a single instance will suffice to show. In a sense, the parable of the sower was all illustration, but it was not illustration *et prœterea nihil.* There lay, underneath every one of its figures, an amazing amount of solid truth—a nucleus, so to speak, capable of being expanded to an all but unlimited extent. Little can be said either for the wisdom or the loyalty of the preacher who, affecting to despise illustration, disdains to cultivate it. In the case of some students there is a tendency to this error, and in that of others a tendency to a style of gorgeous or tawdry embellishment, which is to genuine illustration as Brummagem trinkets to real jewels.

If you wish to understand the real art, make yourselves familiar with the best models. If you wish to train yourselves to the habitual use of suitable illustration, teach a class of children. In breaking down scriptural truth to them, and getting them to understand it, you will constantly find the benefit of illustration. Men are but children of a larger growth, and the habit which you learn in dealing with the young will be of eminent service in dealing with the old. In dealing with children you are not likely to introduce illustrations merely for their own sake. You are not likely to get them up elaborately, as if your object were to show how beautiful a picture you can draw. Mr. Ruskin maintains, elaborately and truly, that whenever Art sets up on its own account, when it becomes the end of its own existence, instead of the handmaid of truth and the spur to duty, it loses its legitimate function, it becomes a bastard. The same is true of the art of illustration. Illustration ought always to be transparent, never opaque. It ought to make what is on the other side of it *more clear*, but never to hide it. In the case of a *Christian* sermon, it should make the Saviour, his person and his work, more conspicuous and more commanding. Dr. Kidder[1] gives an anecdote of a Spanish painter of the Lord's Supper that illustrates this—"It was his object to throw all the sublimity of his art into the figure and countenance of the Saviour; but on the table, in the foreground of the picture, he painted some cups, with such extraordinary beauty and skill that the attention of all who came to see the picture was at once attracted to the cups, and every one was loud in their praise. The painter observing this, saw that he had failed in his design of directing atten-

[1] *Homiletics*, p. 185.

tion to the principal object in the picture, and exclaiming, 'I have made a mistake, for these cups divert the eyes of the spectator from the Master;' he immediately seized his brush and dashed them from the canvas."

So should we dash from our sermons every ornament and illustration that obscures truth rather than brightens it, and throws its shadow on Him whom every power should be employed to delineate "fairer than the children of men."

CHAPTER VI.

QUALITIES OF EFFECTIVE PREACHING—SUBJECTIVE.

In all effective preaching, one share of the effect is due to the matter, and another to the man; to the former we adverted in the last chapter, the latter we proceed to treat of now. The question now is, What are the more personal elements which bear upon the effective presentation of truth to a Christian congregation? it being always borne in mind that the efficient power in the highest sense is the power of God and not of man.

1. To begin with: the preacher must himself be *interested* in what he preaches to others. Interested, we say; but that is a feeble term, not expressing by any means all that needs to be aimed at, but only the first element in the process. The opposite extreme to what we now notice is, when the preacher is so lifeless and careless as to go through his discourse as a mere matter of formal duty, much as he might go through a sermon written in an unknown tongue. It is not likely that in any church where the approval of the congregation counts for anything this extreme will often be found. But without approaching such an extreme, a preacher from various causes may deliver a discourse on an important topic without being himself interested in it, or without being interested in it at the time.

Suppose that he hastily preaches a discourse prepared years before, without taking any pains to get it fresh into his own mind and soul,—the probability is that it will be to his audience like ditch-water, rather than a draught from a limpid stream. To be really effective, it must be a river of living water ; it must be the expression of thoughts and feelings that are alive within him, not dropping out helplessly, like water from a leak, but streaming forth with the freshness and energy of a bubbling fountain. And this condition is by no means inconsistent with the great requisite that what he preaches be essentially the thoughts and word of God. For as the water that issues from a fountain comes originally from the clouds, but in its passage through the earth acquires the sharpness and sparkle of spring-water ; so divine truth, coming first from above, but passing through the soul of the preacher, acquires that element of freshness on which, under God, its efficacy depends. "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him," said our Lord, "shall never thirst ; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John iv. 14).

If, then, you would interest others in what you preach, you must pour out the contents of some of the fountains that Christ has filled in your own soul. It must be something that has come home to yourself—not a mere bundle of excellent remarks, or a *réchauffé* of other men's thoughts. Besides the more direct and obvious advantages of this, it will greatly aid you in the business of delivery. It will enable you to dispense to a large extent with rules and directions on that subject. Almost without an effort, it will make your delivery natural and effective.

It has sometimes happened that in the early part of his ministry a preacher, though with excellent material, has been dry and ineffective, but with the growth of his own mind, and the enlargement of his spiritual resources, he has been emancipated from his thraldom, and has learned to speak with warmth and power. One explanation of his early dryness will probably be found to be that what he preached then was not thoroughly his own. It was his own composition no doubt, and it was his own too, perhaps, as being what he conscientiously and justly regarded as God's truth; but it was put together somewhat artificially—according to the requirements of a system which he loved and honoured as scriptural and sound. His sermons were rather drawn from well-filled theological cisterns than from fountains which God's Spirit had opened in his own soul. But as his acquaintance grew with the Word of God on the one hand, and with the human heart on the other; as he learned better how to digest the one, and how to apply it to the other, he began to find more of these fountains bubbling up within. He had more living thoughts and feelings of his own on divine things. They were not less God's truth than before, but by the process of appropriation and digestion they had become more his own. And so his preaching came to have a new life and interest about it. Age seemed to make him younger and fresher—he realized the figure of the cedar and the palm tree—brought forth fruit in old age—was fat and flourishing (Ps. xcii. 14). It must be obvious that such a process as this, while it makes sermons much more interesting to hearers, renders the business of preparing and preaching them infinitely more pleasant also to the preacher himself.

Great preachers have commonly felt many such springs of heaven-born thought and feeling stirring in their hearts, and have been eager to pour them out—like Elihu, who could not restrain himself after hearing all that Job's three friends had said,—"For I am full of matter, the spirit within me constraineth me. Behold, my belly is as wine that hath no vent; it is ready to burst like new bottles" (Job xxxii. 18, 19). To such a person there must be frequently a difficulty in preaching right on through a book of Scripture, or a course of subjects. It can hardly fail to happen that topics turn up in such a course which, at the first blush at least, have little or no fresh interest for him, and on which he finds it either impossible, or at least very difficult, to be himself. And yet it is remarkable how often a well-furnished active mind will succeed in conducting unlikely subjects into some of its favourite currents of thought, and imparting to them at least a measure of freshness. A similar difficulty often presents itself when it is attempted to preach old sermons. Some great men—Dr. Chalmers among the rest—have had a wonderful faculty of feeling freshly and vividly on subjects which they have discussed again and again. But with ordinary men it is different. The fountains of interest and feeling are sometimes intermittent, or, like some famous spas, they may dry up at one place to burst out at another. The repetition of an old discourse, with which one has been unfamiliar for some time, is always a somewhat perilous experiment, and is not likely to be resorted to by the conscientious preacher *unless he still feels a fresh interest in the subject*, or takes some pains, by additions or otherwise, to connect it with processes that are active in his own mind.

2. The next quality we mention is, in one sense, only the superlative degree of that which has just been illustrated—*earnestness.* Earnestness presupposes an intense interest in the subjects of one's preaching; but besides this, it has vividly before it the circumstances of the audience; it feels the awfully solemn nature of the truths proclaimed to them, and its very soul flows out in the longing desires it cherishes and the appeals it makes for their everlasting welfare. If the main function of the preacher were to reiterate the truths of natural religion, and to urge men to be more conscientious and consistent in their lives, there might be less occasion for the quality we now speak of; and the frigidity of Unitarian pulpits, and of the old Moderate pulpits of Scotland, where the aim was not much higher, has become matter of notoriety. But it is otherwise when the preacher has to address immortal beings lost and ruined through sin, to tell them of the blessed propitiation, and to urge them to commit their souls at once to the Saviour, under fear of a doom more aggravated than ever, if their other sins be crowned by their rejection of him. If all carelessness in regard to important interests be offensive, carelessness in the handling of such themes must be surpassingly so. No man can estimate the deadening effect of an address handling such topics as these in a cold or indifferent tone. Garrick, it is well known, was once asked by a clergyman how it was that he, the actor, dealing in fictions, made so powerful an impression, while the clergyman, dealing in realities, sent the people to sleep. "Because you treat realities as if they were fictions, and I treat fictions as if they were realities." It is of all things most incumbent on the minister of Christ to treat realities as realities. And in order to this it is equally indispensable that

he feel them as realities himself. For there is an earnestness which is not real but assumed, and which can never accomplish the end of that which is real. There is such a thing as a got-up manner, an artificial vehemence of tone, a violent gesticulation in the pulpit, which, however it may please the ignorant, has only the effect of sham and clap-trap on the genuine heart. To speak earnestly one must feel earnestly on subjects of such awful solemnity. And that earnest feeling is something not to be sought merely before preaching, or in the process of preaching, but to be habitually cherished, and often renewed and intensified, during the whole course of our lives.

There are some aspects of human life which are fitted to create a certain feeling of earnestness in the heart of any man of ordinary sensibility and benevolence, whether he be a Christian or not. But this feeling by no means comes up either to the pitch or the quality of evangelical earnestness. At the brightest, human society is a chequered scene. To most men, life's little span is crowded with sorrows and disappointments, often bitter beyond expression, and protracted beyond the hope of remedy. Philanthropy is moved by the spectacle, and labours to mitigate these sufferings. But this philanthropy is not tantamount to evangelical love, although often, directly or indirectly, set in motion by it. The Howards and Wilberforces, the Chalmerses and Shaftesburys that have shown most anxiety for the relief of human suffering, have in point of fact been men of earnest evangelical views. But the spirit that animates the right-hearted minister of the gospel is far deeper than that of common benevolence, and the sorrow that compassionates men's miseries in this world is in him but the lighter play of that deep and

awful emotion which is roused by the thought of their state before God, and their hopeless condition for the life that is to come.

So solemn and awful are the views of life and eternity presented in the Word of God as applicable to a large proportion of the men around us, that were it not that our nature, by its very structure, is incapable of perpetually realizing the awful, or of living in the future, the evangelical minister would be overshadowed by a continual horror. As it is, if his heart be true, as often as he thinks vividly of the state and prospects of a world that lieth in wickedness, he must feel a new impulse to earnestness in inviting sinners to lay hold on the Saviour. His soul will be stirred to its depths as he pleads with God to open their hearts, and draw them to Himself. And even after this great object has been gained, there are ulterior objects that must continue to exercise the most earnest feelings of his heart. There are old habits which the new convert must be induced to abandon; there are holy graces which he must be trained to covet; there are enterprises of Christian love in which he must be enlisted. The spirit of evangelical earnestness implies a heart panting for such results, and incapable of finding rest until the objects of its solicitude are in full training for the inheritance of the saints in light.

In the pursuit of these objects, the earnest preacher combines the coolness of a man of business with the fire of a warrior. Professor Blackie has given a striking definition of the earnest preacher—"a man of business on fire." A man of business—having a special business to transact, a definite object to accomplish, requiring the use of means adapted to the end,—arguments, illustrations, and appeals that must be thought over, put in

proper form, and arranged in due order, as carefully as an engineer plans a bridge, or a general arranges his army. But once the materials are chosen and made ready, the process itself needs to be carried on at a red heat. Unless it is besieged with urgency and fervour, the citadel of Mansoul had better be let alone. The neglect either of the business element or of the propelling element in the process is disastrous. Artillery without powder and powder without artillery are equally in vain. If you neglect the business part, if you are not provided with solid reasons in orderly array, your harangue will become rant—soft, pulpy declamation, with little power to move. If you have an ample stock of strong considerations but no fervour to propel them, your arrows will fall at your feet, instead of sticking fast in the hearts of the people. The great preachers of all times and countries have been marked by both qualities. The resources of well-trained and well-furnished intellects, and the fervour of deeply-exercised hearts, have been yoked together for their pulpit work. They have tried to open their hearts to the full influence of the solemn truths of revelation—placed them, as it were, at the very roots of their being, and sought to have their hearts saturated by them ; and they have diligently trained their faculties of thought and speech to give expression to their convictions in a suitable way. It is recorded of William Burns, so eminent as an earnest preacher, that, in his youth, his mother on one occasion observed him walking in deep reverie in a side-street in Glasgow. Though she went up straight to him, he was quite unconscious of her presence, and started, when addressed, as from a dream. "Oh, mother," he said, with deep emotion, "I did not see you ; for when walking along Argyle Street just

now, I was so overcome with the sight of the countless crowds of immortal beings eagerly hasting hither and thither, and all posting onwards towards the eternal world, that I could bear it no longer, and turned in here to seek relief in quiet thought."[1]

3. Kindred to the qualities of efficient preaching now considered, is a third—*affectionateness*. The command to "speak the truth in love" (Eph. iv. 15) is of course not equivalent to a command to speak it in softness, or to serve it up like sugar-plums, in the manner that has been called the "goody-goody" style. It is not a command to intersperse discourses with many epithets of endearment,—a thing which our blessed Lord dealt in very sparingly, and which even the most warm-hearted of his apostles, John and Paul, did not employ much. Such endearing words, when they do occur in the epistles, are generally near the close, after the writer's heart has warmed with his subject, or with some very pathetic thought which has presented itself to him. Christian affectionateness does not imply the opposite of manliness, but is rather the true quality of manliness. It is a quality, in the handling of divine truth, which, among hearers, the manly heart desiderates, and which, among preachers, the manly heart tries to supply. It certainly does not imply anything that would prevent the outburst of holy indignation on occasions suitable to the expression of such a feeling; for neither our Lord, nor John, nor Paul had any difficulty in giving expression to indignation, on suitable occasions, in the most unqualified terms. Indeed, there is something almost startling in the thunder-like roll of denunciation, not uncommon in David and the prophets, which both our Lord and his apostles poured

[1] *Memoir*, p. 53.

out, and which, on the very eve of his martyrdom, the meek heart of Stephen poured out, in reproof of the wickedness which was directed against them. Observe, however, that indignation is properly a burst, and is therefore entirely different from a settled harshness or hardness of temper. Observe, too, that the wickedness with which the prophets and also our Lord and his apostles had to contend, was of the most undisguised and outrageous character; and observe further, that if you have singleness of eye, and if you hold pride, selfishness, and irritability in check, there is hardly any risk of your mistaking the occasions on which indignant denunciation is the proper mode of dealing with wickedness.

These exceptional cases, however, do not invalidate the position that a tone of affectionateness is both the right ordinary tone for the preacher, and that this tone is especially to be cultivated when disagreeable truth has to be spoken, or when a spirit of opposition has to be overcome. For the preacher is one who has to win souls, and there is no way of winning without love. The preacher is the representative of the great Father, whose great power for winning men back to himself is love: "I drew them with cords of a man, with the bands of love" (Hosea xi. 4). The gospel of which he has charge is the gospel of infinite love. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16). To preach such a gospel, to represent such a God, without the habitual spirit of love, would be as outrageous as for the bearer of a flag of truce to scatter oaths and curses among those whom he invited to peace.

We have said that there is a special call on the Christian preacher to stir up the spirit of love when

disagreeable truth has to be spoken, and when a spirit of opposition has to be overcome. Disagreeable truth—such as the doom of the sinner, the divine retribution on sin, the awfulness of the wrath to come. To handle such topics in ordinary circumstances in a tone of stern severity is utterly revolting, and one cannot but admire the question of M'Cheyne, when, in answer to his inquiry, a brother minister told him that his sermon on the previous day had been on the punishment of the wicked. "And were you able," asked he, "to preach it *tenderly?*" There are not a few subjects in our theology that are capable of becoming frightfully repulsive in the hands of hard and heartless preachers, and in such a case the more able the sermon the more terrible is the perversion it is likely to cause.

But if it be incumbent on preachers to stir up the spirit of love when painful truth has to be spoken, it is still more so when opposition has to be overcome. Guardians of divine truth are very liable to excited feeling. It is an unpleasant thing when your hearers will not attend to you. It is still more so when they actively oppose you, or when persons, who are not your hearers, oppose you. It is deeply unpleasant when truths that you prize, as the very foundation of eternal life, are assailed by others, when the cause which you admire and support is held up to scorn and ridicule, and when all manner of unfairness is made use of to damage truth and prop up error. It is in such circumstances that the spirit of love needs to be specially looked after. One needs to take great heed lest one give way to that impatience of opposition which is common more or less to all, and which, in some temperaments, rises to the height of a fever. Such impatience is but a carnal feeling, and can never be

sanctified by any connexion with religion. It is not zeal for truth, but impatience of opposition that commonly tempts theologians to aim those hard hits, which no doubt enliven controversy, but make it extremely dangerous. Looking back along the history of the Reformed Church of Scotland, as well as of other Churches, there is much cause to regret the tremendous bitterness that has characterized our periods of religious controversy. This fact, which can hardly be questioned, shows the tendency of the earnest religious mind to fall under carnal influences, and to forget that in Christianity the greatest of all the graces is Charity.

The want of affectionateness, thus apt to show itself in the arena of dispute, exerts its influence on the pulpit too. Scottish Christianity has not hitherto been of a particularly loving type. We often comfort ourselves by saying that it is of a sturdy type, and that if English or Continental Christianity be more loving, ours is more powerfully and consistently logical. But why might we not have all our sturdiness, and love along with it? Why might not that type of character be realized among us that was found in those apostles who were at once sons of consolation and sons of thunder? Such a combination would give to Scottish Christianity an almost unlimited power. It would make its power to win equal to its power to awe, and correct the imputation so often cast upon our Calvinistic doctrine of God, that it represents him as a God to be feared but not a God to be loved.

4. Still kindred to the qualities of efficient preaching that have been illustrated is a *fourth*—the spirit of *sympathy.*

This is St. Paul's spirit—"all things to all men" (1 Cor. ix. 22); trying to understand men's feelings, as

the springs of their actions; considering from what causes their temptations arise, and dealing with them accordingly; thinking how we should feel and act under similar circumstances and influences; adapting our instructions to their circumstances and even prejudices, as far as we can do so honestly; coming down, as our blessed Lord did, to their level, in order that we may carry them upwards to his.

Such a spirit is especially incumbent when we are addressing persons whose mode of life or habits of thought are quite different from our own. Let it be supposed that we, being strangers to all shade of doubt, are dealing with persons of speculative habit of mind, with a morbid distrust of traditional judgments, and a strong determination to prove all things; persons who halt at every step, and question positions on which we feel that our very salvation rests. Obviously such a case, instead of being scornfully denounced, as it often is, demands a very unusual degree of consideration and forbearance. Or suppose that we, leading a leisurely life, aided by all the appliances of civilisation, going to church and meeting at the regular hours without effort or difficulty, have a number of hearers struggling for very life under the heaviest burdens, toiling without rest from morn to dewy eve, and depressed by sorrows and anxieties that gnaw them like a grinding toothache by day and by night,—it were out of the question to address them as if they were in comfortable circumstances like ourselves.

This spirit of sympathy, we may remark, lies at the foundation of all successful district working. The way to get on among the poor, especially such as are broken down morally and spiritually, is to feel towards them as persons having the same nature

with ourselves,—not a whit worse than we might have been had we been reared in the same circumstances, and exposed to the same influences. The power of sympathy in such a case is magical. Do we ourselves not feel, when we have become liable to blame, that what we chiefly desire on the part of others is consideration of the circumstances under which we stumbled? The preacher that gives a lame sermon occasionally would fain have his audience to know something of the unexpected interruptions, the headache, the weariness and the worries without number, under the influence of which it was composed. The gentleman who unhappily loses his temper, in the presence of his friend, when speaking to his clerk or to his servant, takes much pains to explain the hidden provocations that made him so fierce. None of us like ruthless and indiscriminate censure. If in visiting among the poor we find many things out of sorts, and would desire to remedy them, we must be considerate. Simply to taunt and scold will only make things worse. Even to treat them as persons who are altogether wrong and guilty, but whose errors and faults we are good enough to try to rectify, will probably drive them to be sullen, will make them hide from us, and creep within their shell. We must treat them as brothers and sisters, who have a fallen nature certainly, needing to be regenerated by the grace of God, but after all, a nature not essentially different from our own. So also in laying out for them a path for the future, we must take into consideration their ways and habits of life, the obstacles to their Christian progress, and the actual path along which they have to go.

If this spirit of sympathy is essential to success in

the rounds of pastoral or missionary labour, it is hardly less so in the pulpit. The most persuasive preacher, other things being equal, is the preacher who has the most correct apprehension of the circumstances of his hearers, and the largest consideration for them. Let it not be said that this spirit leads to a good-natured apology for all vice and all error. On the contrary, it is when true sympathy is in operation that you are most free to denounce sin and condemn error,—to deliver God's testimony against them most uncompromisingly. Consideration is not indulgence, it is the very opposite. You tell the people that you know what has tempted them into sin, but you warn them to think what sin is—how fiercely, how horribly God hates it, how it robs him of all his due, how it poisons and ruins their whole nature, and yet what a frightful hold it has got of them. If only we have, in union with sympathy, such zeal and intensity as that of men like St. Paul or Chalmers, we shall not be liable to apologize for sin. Chalmers presented a marvellous instance of the union of sympathy and enthusiasm, great breadth and great force, ample consideration for the circumstances of different classes, and yet extraordinary power of urging them upwards. But the most memorable of all instances of the union of sympathy and intensity is in the case of our Lord. He who shielded the miserable adulterer from the harsh violence of her accusers; he who looked with such love on the young man who, though he failed, was not far from the kingdom of God; he who burst into tears at the grave of Lazarus, when he saw the distress of Mary; he who prayed on the cross—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," became to us all a wonderful example of sympathy.

Need we speak of *his* loyalty to truth and duty? or of the impulse he gave in the direction of what is pure and noble, and in opposition to all falsehood and wrong?

But while cultivating sympathy with man, we must never forget the necessity of a predominant sympathy or fellow-feeling with God. If, on the one hand, we would avoid the hardness of tone that looks at truth and duty only in the abstract, and enforces their claims by sheer pressure on soul and conscience; on the other hand, we must beware of treating men as if they were simply unfortunate, the victims of unfavourable circumstances. We need to keep in the forefront of our teaching the fact that sin dishonours God, and would fain dethrone Him. God has claims on us as Creator, Jesus Christ has claims as Redeemer, the Holy Ghost has claims as Teacher and Sanctifier. To enforce these claims is not a secondary but a primary part of our duty. Due weight and due order must be given to every part of the angel's proclamation :—First, glory to God in the highest; then peace on earth, good-will toward men.

There is a something yet to be mentioned as a quality of effective preaching;—not so much however a separate quality, as an atmosphere or aroma gendered by the presence of the rest. It is the indescribable thing that is called *unction*, what all understand, but what no one can define. It is indeed amusing to observe how variously unction has been attempted to be defined. According to one, it is the joint product of the Holy Spirit's influence on the heart of the speaker, and of His sanctified efforts on the hearts of the hearers. According to Blair, it is the union of gravity

and warmth; or more fully, that affecting, penetrating, interesting manner, flowing from a strong sensibility of heart in the preacher to the importance of those truths which he delivers, and an earnest desire that they may make a due impression on the hearts of his hearers. To Vinet, unction appears to be the total characteristic of the Gospel, recognisable, doubtless, in each of its parts, but especially observable in it as a whole; it is the general savour of Christianity; it is a gravity accompanied with tenderness, a severity tempered with mildness, a majesty united with intimacy; it is the true temper of the Christian dispensation, in which, according the Psalmist, "mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Dutoit-Membrini, as quoted by Vinet, represents it as "a gentle warmth which makes itself felt in the powers of the soul. It produces in the spiritual world the same effects as the sun in the physical. It enlightens and it warms. It gives light to the soul, and warmth to the heart. It makes us know and love, it interests. . . . Its only source is the spirit of regeneration and of grace. It is a gift which is spent and lost, unless we renew this sacred fire which must always be kept burning; and that which preserves it is the cross within the soul, self-denial, prayer and penitence. . . . Unction is felt, is known by experience; it cannot be analysed. It produces its impression secretly, and without the aid of reflection."

Our purpose in quoting so many definitions where nothing is defined is simply to bring out the fact that in preaching of the true order there are qualities which have no separate genesis, but are the results of the purer forms of Christian feeling and experience. What Opie said to the coxcomb that asked him with what he

mixed his colours—"With brains, sir,"—might suggest the answer to any one who should ask a recipe for unction. "There are no artificial means," says Vinet, "of acquiring it; oil flows of itself from the olive; the most violent pressure cannot produce a drop from the earth or the flint." Unctuousness you may produce by something like the apothecary's art; but genuine unction defies your chemistry. The artificial product differs from the genuine as the scents extracted from coal-tar differ from the fragrance of myrrh and aloes and cassia. True unction belongs only to true grace, and to humble gracious feeling; it refuses to associate itself with the coarse arts of the pretender.

CHAPTER VII.

PREPARATION FOR PREACHING.

PREPARATION for preaching is of two kinds; the habitual training of all the faculties to be engaged, so as to bring them up to the highest state of fitness and efficiency; and the study of particular passages or subjects, with a view to the delivery of discourses upon them.

It is with the former of these that we are to be occupied in this chapter. To young and inexperienced preachers it is hardly possible to convey a deep enough sense of the importance of this species of preparation. Usually it is by experience that a sense of the difficulty of good preaching comes. A sermon that seemed splendid to a young man when he made it at twenty-five, will quite possibly appear pitiful when he looks over it at fifty. "If I were sure of living ten years," an able preacher once remarked, "I should spend nine of them in preparing to preach during the tenth." Experience shows us how much is lost in our ordinary preaching; how few hearers we move even feebly, how many we fail to move at all; what need therefore there is for asking more strength from above, and taking more pains to be plain, pointed, interesting, and impressive; so that we would fain begin our ministry anew, resolved to take far greater pains to sharpen our

weapon and use it to good purpose. "Preaching," said the distinguished Jansenist, St. Cyran, "is a mystery not less terrible than that of the Eucharist. By preaching, souls are begotten and raised to life for God; in the Eucharist, they are only nourished, or rather healed. In order to render ourselves worthy of this office, we must labour to obtain a great mastery over self, and after we have brought the heart to desire nothing in this world, we must bring the tongue to silence—which is, as I understand it, the last perfection attained by the man who labours to attain unto virtue. Only thus can we become worthy of presenting the word of God before the world, and of publishing its truths, without thinking in the least of ourselves or others, as we are required to do in *prayer*, from which exhortation and preaching can never be separated, if they are performed according to the will of God. . . . For my part, I would rather say a hundred masses than preach once. The altar is a place of solitude, but the pulpit in which we preach is the place of an assembled public, where we should be more apprehensive of offending God than in any other place, . . . if we do not enter it after having laboured diligently to mortify our own spirit, as well as to mortify that itching curiosity to learn many and fine things which all men have, and which is the greatest temptation which remains to us from Adam's transgression."

The question has sometimes been asked whether it is wise for a young preacher to form a high, or rather the highest, ideal of a good sermon. On the one side it is said that by this means he is sure to be stimulated to great exertion, and perhaps to considerable success; while on the other side it is affirmed that he is liable to be discouraged, in consequence of his inability to

come near the model which he has placed before his mind.

There can be little doubt that there are some in whose case the latter result does take place;—chiefly, however, over-sensitive and self-conscious persons, who are easily thrown down; or persons wanting in that energy and perseverance which, in more vigorous natures, secures a wonderful succession of efforts, and at last is crowned with success. But in the great majority of cases it is impossible to doubt that a high ideal is of the greatest benefit. If a man has aught of the soul of an artist, it is not the commonplace works of art that are most likely to inspire and stimulate him, but the master-pieces of genius, even though for a long time the attempt to imitate them may be a miserable failure. There is an anecdote of a celebrated painter, that he never had a thought of art till one day he saw a master-piece of one of the Caraccis carried past him in the street, when in a moment the artist's soul awoke in him, and made him exclaim, "I too am a painter!"

Undoubtedly then, for the most part, it is highly desirable that the young preacher should habitually place before his mind a very high idea of what a sermon ought to be. As far as opportunity serves, let him listen to the ablest preachers, and let him select for reading and study the productions of some of the great masters of the art, of whom, as we have seen, both ancient and modern times furnish so large a number. It is probably the circumstance of a low standard being often kept in view that accounts for much inferior preaching. Preachers are apt to fall into the notion that it is enough to produce what will *decently serve the turn*, instead of cherishing the deep conviction that on

every occasion they ought *to do their very best.* The remark has been made, even in regard to secular matters, that no great success attends the labours of those who, instead of aiming at the best, are content to do things merely in a passable way. The late Sir Robert Peel used to remark, in explanation of the backwardness of one part of the United Kingdom, which shall be nameless, that the people, instead of aiming at what was best and most excellent, were content to have things either "good enough," or "well enough," or "in time enough." The constant endeavour to find out the very best way of doing things, and the doing of them accordingly, is what has given to the greater part of our countrymen so high a position in industry, in engineering, and in the arts and manufactures generally. Whatever their hand found to do, they have done it with their might.

If, then, in common secular matters, it has been customary for men of the highest stamp to aim at the greatest excellence of which they are capable, how much more incumbent is it on those who have had committed to them the interests of immortal souls, to fling from them the indolence that is content with decent mediocrity, and strive, God helping them, to do their work in the best possible way! Much will be attained if the mental habit be formed in the young preacher of frequently interrupting himself, in the course of his preparation, with the question, "Is this the best that, with God's grace, I can do?" It matters little if, as the result, many first attempts should be consigned to the flames, and he should still find himself, after hours of effort, apparently, but not really, at the beginning of his undertaking.

But let us come more to particulars, glancing first at

the intellectual, next the spiritual, and lastly the physical preparation.

I. And first,—preparation for preaching implies a thoroughly disciplined state of the *intellectual* powers. It implies that the young preacher has been trained, and has trained himself, to bend his powers to the investigation and exposition of truth, has acquired the mental habits favourable to that exercise, and a measure of freedom and familiarity in the pursuit. It implies, that while engaged in mental labour, he is not at the mercy of every impulse or freak of fancy that may rise within him; not tempted, like a child at play, to run after every butterfly that may flit across his path, but able to keep his attention bent on the proper object before him, and to regulate his habits accordingly. It implies further, that his mental powers have acquired some measure of *robustness* and *skill* in the investigation and exposition of truth; that he has attained a measure of self-reliance, in the proper sense of that term, and is not at the mercy of any strong-minded or strong-willed person, who, however confidently, may come pressing contrary views upon him. The degree or amount of this intellectual preparation which a student brings to the work of preaching, must obviously depend on the diligence and perseverance with which he has prosecuted the various branches of a literary and theological education. That is to say, provided his mode of learning has not been a mere system of cramming—provided he has not been trained simply to swallow the views of others, but has been in the true sense educated—drawn out, made to exercise his own powers. Of course, it will not be thought by any intelligent young man that this process of mental discipline terminates when technically his studies come to a close. It is

indeed a life-long process. But he who enters on the ministry with a fair measure of self-discipline, and command of his mental powers and habits, will find the benefit all through life. The struggles which it cost him at first to subdue himself will have their reward. He will find, as years roll on, that with comparatively little effort his powers can be brought to bear on his work, and can achieve results quite wonderful in the eyes of those who do not consider the long preparatory process that has been silently but steadily gone through. It is said that Sir Joshua Reynolds was once asked how he could charge a hundred and fifty guineas for some picture when it had taken him but three days to paint it. "Three days!" said the indignant painter; "it has taken me five-and-thirty years." The capacity to paint it in three days represented a course of discipline extending over his whole professional life. A well-disciplined preacher, in like manner, after years of exercise, may be able to prepare a discourse in comparatively little time, showing a marvellous combination of faculties, and marvellous perfection of each. He may even be able to preach extempore, and thoughtless men may ask, What is the use of young men spending hours on the preparation of discourses, when this preacher does so much better by an extempore effort? But in truth that extempore effort may be the result of a lifetime of discipline. The self-possession, the power of orderly thinking and expression, the lines of thought that have been opened, the stores of illustration that have been made available, represent the discipline and the industry of a lifetime. There may be a few cases in which genius springs, almost at a bound, to these heights, but in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred they are reached only by the slow process of elaborate self-discipline.

There is no little consolation in this view for able ministers when they happen to occupy small and obscure positions. For the most part it is the tempter's voice that tells them, that in these humble spheres they are wasting their energies. Wasting them they certainly are, if they are tempted to think that they may take their ease, allow their minds to run wild, as it were, and content themselves with the most careless performance of duty. But they are doing the very opposite of wasting them, if they are binding on their consciences the obligation to do their very best; if, in that humble sphere, they are resolutely strangling every temptation to indolence and self-indulgence, and are resolved to hear no voice but that of him who has given them their talents, saying, "Occupy till I come." It is this, and not an impatient contempt of an insignificant sphere, that forms the true road to promotion. But even should their conscientious endeavours pass without acknowledgment and without reward in this life, they must not suppose that they have laboured in vain. The training acquired in this life, we may be sure, is not lost in the life to come; and even though the Master's voice of encouragement should not be heard till the day of judgment, it will not be too late to hear the glorious announcement,—"Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful in a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

In passing from the subject of intellectual *discipline*, to advert to the intellectual *stores* that ought to be laid in as a preparation for efficient preaching, we should have, first of all, to speak of the whole course of study carried on in our Divinity Halls. Obviously it is unnecessary to say much of this now, but on one branch

a few words must be said,—namely, Biblical study. The systematic study of the Holy Scriptures manifestly holds the first rank in the category of preparation for preaching.

It may be doubted whether any man, not even excepting the celebrated preachers in the Church of Rome, ever became great in the pulpit without drinking in copiously of the Word of God. What Lamartine has said of the famous Bishop of Meaux illustrates in one aspect the value of Biblical study to preachers, though there are higher aspects of the subject to which the poet does not advert:—"The Bible, and, above all, the poetical portions of Holy Writ, struck as if with lightning, and dazzled the eyes of the child: he fancied he saw the living fire of Sinai, and heard the voice of omnipotence re-echoed by the rocks of Horeb. His God was Jehovah; his lawgiver, Moses; his high-priest, Aaron; his poet, Isaiah; his country, Judea. The vivacity of his imagination, the poetical bent of his genius, the analogy of his disposition to that of the Orientals, the fervid nature of the people and ages described, the sublimity of the language, the everlasting novelty of the history, the grandeur of the laws, the piercing eloquence of the hymns, and finally, the ancient, consecrated, and traditionally reverential character of the Book transformed Bossuet at once into a biblical enthusiast. The metal was malleable; the impression was received, and remained indelibly stamped. This child became a prophet: such he was born, such he was as he grew to manhood, lived and died: *the Bible transfused into a man.*"[1]

The study of Scripture proper to a theological student or to a preacher may be said to be threefold—critical,

[1] See Potter's *Sacred Eloquence*, p. 51.

personal, homiletical. His critical study is directed to the ascertaining of its true meaning; his personal study to the edification of his own soul; his homiletical study to the instruction and edification of his people. It were a happy state of mind if he could at one and the same time study the Scriptures critically, practically, and homiletically. And no doubt it is an attainable state of things. A man like John Albert Bengel in his mature years could not have separated the three. But in most cases, it seems desirable that the student should begin with separate readings, at least for personal or devotional purposes.

(1.) No student of divinity ought to want his sacred season of daily personal fellowship with God, or to stand in need of being urged to the solemn perusal of the Scriptures during that season, in order that he may hear God's message to his own soul. The very life of the soul depends on this and kindred exercises; they supply the oil that keeps the lamp burning; they are parts of the breathing process that give oxygen to the blood.[1] The Romish priest is bound to read daily a considerable portion of his breviary; but it is otherwise in the Protestant church, and there is a risk, since no such formal rule is prescribed, and the matter is left to conscience alone, that the devout reading of the Bible for personal edification may either be omitted, or carelessly performed.

(2.) As little ought it to be necessary to stimulate students of divinity to a full critical and exegetical

[1] "An hour of solitude, as has been well remarked, passed in sincere and earnest prayer, or the conflict with, and struggle over, a single passion, or subtle bosom sin, will teach us more of thought, will more effectually awaken the faculty and form the habit of reflection, than a year's study in the schools without them."—*See* Shedd, p. 132.

acquaintance with Scripture. To be able to grasp the great purposes of divine revelation as a whole—to see at the same time the drift and bearing of its several parts, to apprehend the great lessons of the various histories, biographies, and epistles, the parables, the sermons, the doctrinal statements, the allegories, the lyrical effusions, that make up holy Scripture; to know where to find the most striking statements on any subject which Scripture embraces, to make one part throw light on another, and bring out the chief lessons of the whole, are attainments of inestimable value to the future preacher of the Word.

(3.) But beyond this, though not much beyond it, there is a homiletical object to be kept in view in the study of Scripture. The mind of the student ought to acquire a homiletical habit, and to get into the way of thinking, as he goes along, what use for preaching purposes can be made of this and of that part of Scripture; while a record will be kept of what strikes him as available, and of the line of thought which it has opened up to him. No farmer can be acting wisely who does not look well to his seed-corn, and make sure of enough to sow all the acres that are to be under crop the following season; and no preacher can be acting wisely who does not take care to provide himself with a sufficiency of germs or homiletical seed-corn for future use. This homiletical habit, while connecting itself mainly with the reading of the Scriptures, will operate also upon any other material that may be made available for the purpose. We are told of a Grecian general who, when he travelled and viewed the country around him, revolved in his mind how an army could be there drawn up to greatest advantage; how he could best defend himself if attacked from such a quarter;

how advance with greatest security, how retreat with least danger. "Something similar to this (says Dr. Shedd) should be the practice and study of a public speaker. It is as fitting that the preacher should be characterized by a homiletical tendency, as that the poet should be characterized by a poetical tendency. If it is proper that the poet should transmute everything that he touches into poetry, it is proper that the preacher should transmute everything he touches into sermons. This homiletic habit will appear in a disposition to skeletonize, to construct plans, to examine and criticise discourses with respect to their logical structure. The preacher's mind becomes habitually *organific*. It is inclined to build. Whenever leading thoughts are brought into the mind, they are straightway arranged and disposed into the unity of a plan, instead of being allowed to lie here and there, like scattered boulders on a field of drift. This homiletic habit will appear again in a disposition to render all the argumentative and illustrative materials which pour in upon the educated man from the various fields of science, literature, and art, subservient to the purposes of preaching. The sermonizer is, or should be, a student, and an industrious one, a reader, and a thoughtful one. He will, consequently, in the course of his studies, meet with a great variety of information which may be advantageously employed in sermonizing, either as proof or illustration, provided he possesses the proper power to elaborate it and work it up."[1]

The variety and richness of the stores that may be rendered thus available are very great, provided you have the eye that detects them, and the hand that diligently lays them up in storehouses, in the shape of

[1] Shedd's *Homiletics and Pastoral Theology*, pp. 108, 109.

note-books or literary indexes. Mr. Spurgeon once remarked that he would think little of the man who, from a daily newspaper, could not find material in large quantity that would be of service in the construction or illustration of a sermon. Not that the sermon should be constructed after the fashion of the preacher who collected from the newspapers, and gave in full detail, all the instances of fatal accidents and sudden deaths which the week supplied, and concluded by calling on his people to take a warning on the uncertainty of life. This was the process of accumulation without an effort at organization. But passing facts are often of great value to a preacher, if wisely used. Any one may notice how the drooping attention of a congregation is often caught up by a reference to a fact of the day. The preacher had been losing himself in the cloud-land of abstractions, but when he came down to the sphere of actual fact, his hearers, almost without exception, rallied round him. It was like blowing a trumpet to collect scattered troops. To a certain extent, this explains the influence of anecdotes. Be they good, bad, or indifferent, they seldom fail to command attention. They contain facts, to begin with, facts of a somewhat dramatic character, and stimulating the curiosity of the hearers, who are generally eager to know the use to be made of them. Mr. Jay of Bath, when he came to Scotland, was warned that it would be perilous to his reputation to introduce anecdotes in his sermons, as something quite out of keeping with the solid taste of the people. Notwithstanding the warning, he found that he could use them even in Scotland with advantage. Like other things they are good if a man use them lawfully; if he introduce them as occasional seasoning, not the chief nourishment of the discourse. But in the way

of illustrations, one's daily reading and one's daily observation are fitted to yield a constant supply of useful material. The preacher that reads—be it travels, history, biography, philosophy, speeches in parliament, poetry, fiction, reviews, or ballads—with an eye all the time to the pulpit, will be gathering a store of illustrations which he will never be likely to meet with, if he merely begins to search for them when he needs them. "Go to the ant" may be addressed to the preacher in more senses than one; be always storing, so that on an emergency you have only to step into the storehouse and take out what you may desire. But be the store to be used what it may, it is indispensable that it be passed through the mill of the preacher's own mind, so as to come out with his own image and superscription. A sermon ought not to be a piece of conglomerate, nor a coat of many colours, but an organized structure with a pervading unity.

II. The next branch of habitual preparation for effective preaching is what we have called the *spiritual*. If preaching be a thing of the heart as much as of the head, the heart as well as the head must be brought into a state of preparation. And this can only be achieved through the maintenance of high spirituality of mind. That is to say, by keeping the soul much in contact with unseen and eternal realities, and by having one's impressions of these renewed and intensified from time to time. In the history of certain preachers it may be remarked that at certain times their ministry has been marked by a manifest increase of divine power. Such times have been seasons of remarkable visitation, of deep personal affliction, of overwhelming public calamity, or of powerful spiritual awakening. It is said of M'Cheyne that one Saturday afternoon

being met by a brother on his way to visit a dying person, and asked how he could spare such a time for that purpose, his answer was, "I always like before preaching to look over the brink." And the more a preacher's mind is filled with the views of life which the death-bed gives, and the tremendous significance which the doctrine of the cross thus derives, the more powerfully and impressively will he be likely to preach. To this qualification there is no royal road. No brilliancy of mental gifts, no success in study, no natural fervour can enable a preacher to dispense with the habit of spiritual contemplation, the fellowship with the unseen which is required to give the true tone to his sermons. Some preachers deem it necessary to seek what is called inspiration before beginning to compose sermons or to preach. Some have been tempted to draw on strong waters for the needed mental excitement; others have sought the stimulus in the pages of the spasmodic poet or the sensational novelist. But what inspiration, what stimulus of the preaching faculty can equal that which comes from a vivid view of the great truths of Revelation? If only, by God's great mercy, we could attain just impressions of the state of man, the love of God, the grace of the Saviour, the malignant energy of the devil, the doom of sin, the fearful conflict raging around us between the prince of this world and the Lord of Heaven, and the awful issue of the strife in which we are engaged, should we not have the right kind of inspiration? If we could only realize vividly the actual life of some one to whom we may be called to preach:—the blinding power of lust by which he is wont to be assailed, the frightful craving he experiences, the loathsome ruin of which he is on the brink, the troubled life, the dark death-bed, the horrible resur-

rection, the eternity of despair; on the other hand, the glorious results of a saving change,—of a vision of the Saviour to his soul, and new life in him; if, moreover, we could see the difference of the effect or impression *on others* in the two cases,—in the one, the corrupted heart a propaganda of pollution, misery and death; in the other, the regenerate heart a fountain of strength, joy and beauty, on every side; in the one case, the Saviour weeping as he wept over Jerusalem,—in the other, the Saviour seeing of the travail of his soul and being satisfied—oh! would not our hearts fill with the noble dignity of our office, and the prayer go up like a lightning-flash to heaven for divine strength to fulfil this glorious ministry!

In order to maintain this spirituality of mind, it is useful, among other instrumentalities, for preachers to include some earnest spiritual treatise in the list of what they habitually read. It is desirable that they should be in daily contact with earnest thoughts and feelings, and especially when preparing an address for the pulpit. To many of the old writers, Augustine, Bernard, à Kempis and others far remote, or Baxter, Bunyan, Leighton, or Rutherford among those more recent, there was granted a singular clearness of spiritual vision, and a marvellous fervour in writing of what they knew. A kind of magnetic influence goes forth even from their writings, and tends to inspire in kindred hearts a corresponding feeling. It must be a cold nature indeed that is not warmed into a higher fervour than usual, by the perusal of the appeal in which Baxter remonstrates with ministers on the habitual coldness of their feelings:—"Oh! how can you forbear, when you are alone, to think yourselves what it is to be everlastingly in joy or torment! I wonder

that such thoughts do not break your sleep, and that they do not crowd into your minds when you are about your labour! I wonder how you can almost do anything else! How can you have any quietness in your minds? How can you eat, or drink, or rest, till you have got some ground of everlasting consolations? Is that a man or a corpse that is not affected with matters of this moment, that can be readier to sleep than to tremble when he hears how he must stand at the bar of God? Is that a man or a clod of clay that can rise up and lie down without being deeply affected with his eternal state, that can follow his earthly business and make nothing of the great business of salvation or damnation, and that when he knows it is so hard at hand? Truly, sirs, when I think of the weight of the matter, I wonder at the best saints on earth, that they are no better and do no more, in so weighty a case. I wonder at those whom the world accounts more holy than needs, and scorns for making so much ado, that they can put off Christ and their souls with so little; that they do not pour out their souls in every prayer; that they are not more taken up with God; that their thoughts are not more serious in preparation for their last account. I wonder that they are not a thousand times more strict in their lives, and more laborious and unwearied for the crown than they are. And for myself, as I am ashamed of my dull and careless heart, and of my slow and unprofitable course of life, so the Lord knows that I am ashamed of every sermon that I preach; when I think what I am, and who sent me, and how much salvation and damnation of men is concerned in it, I am ready to tremble, lest God should judge me a slighter of His truth, and of the souls of men, and lest I should in my best sermon be guilty of their blood."

Time will not allow us to follow out into all their manifestations the lines of thought which these views open up. If the preacher would have his heart as well as his head in a due state of preparation, let him sometimes cultivate solitude, or rather the solitude in which he has the company of his Master. Let him recal the ends for which He came into the world and gave Himself up to be the Redeemer; try to enter afresh into sympathy with Him in these ends; take encouragement from the fact that the work is Christ's, and all power in heaven and earth is given to Him; let him meditate on the abundant promises of the gift of the Holy Spirit to as many as wait for His grace; let him ask the strength that is made perfect in weakness; and let him remember that solemn day of reckoning, when all that he has done shall be brought to the touchstone of *faithful service*,—Was it done to please himself, or was it done to serve the Master?

III. It now remains to say a few words on *physical* preparation for preaching.

The present generation is much more disposed than some of its predecessors to believe in a certain connection between good health and good preaching, although to many persons it may seem that there is no such connection, while a smaller number may think that a preacher's delicate health actually aids the impression produced. And no doubt there is a certain class of truths which are taught more impressively by a man who bears the seal of death on his wasted face; but on the other hand, such a man's influence in other respects is feeble, if not injurious. "It is impossible," says Mr. Beecher, "for an invalid to sustain a cheerful and hopeful ministry among his people. An invalid looks with a sad eye on human life. He may be sym-

pathetic, but it is almost always with the shadows that are in the world. He will give out moaning and drowsy hymns. He will make prayers that are almost all piteous. It may not be a minister's fault if he be afflicted and ill, and administers his duties in mourning and sadness, but it is a vast misfortune for his people."[1]

The sad, sombre, melancholy look of the invalid preacher, and indeed a heavy, dull, dreary look in any preacher, has a specially repulsive effect on the young. It insensibly leads them to associate with church services the very opposite of those happy feelings which they so readily associate with their sports. Under any circumstances, the solemnity of Divine worship constitutes something of a trial for the buoyant, playful tendencies of youth, but infinitely the more on that account is it matter for regret if the trial is aggravated by the repulsiveness of a countenance on which nothing bright and radiant ever appears to settle.

But even where there is no positive disease, there may be a physical languor that reflects itself in feebleness of voice, dulness of tone, stiffness of manner, and a general want of lively and attractive power. It may be difficult to persuade some preachers that physical causes have anything to do with this, but the connexion is beyond all reasonable doubt. And the fact that such symptoms are the effect of some transgression of the laws of health makes it incumbent on the student to attend to the condition of his outer man. Not—as he values the temper of his friends and his congregation—that he is to bore them by constantly obtruding the state of his health on their attention. One should be able to look after one's health quietly, without plaguing the world either with the process, or

[1] *Lectures on Preaching*, i. 189.

the reasons for it. Sometimes, indeed, it is impossible for the student to care for it as he might, and as he would if he were driven less by the *res angusta*, or if he could content himself with a lower standard of qualification; and sometimes without knowing it he exhausts that reserve fund of health which ought to be husbanded in youth, so that the spring of his constitution is broken, and the seeds of early decay are sown. Everything points to the duty of caring for the health and vigour of the body, and especially of the three organs on which the preacher is specially dependent—the stomach, the nerves, and the lungs.

Of the *stomach*, we say, because from any disorder there, spring those nameless morbid feelings which gender depressing views of life and duty, sour thoughts of one's position, and bitter onslaughts on one's rivals or opponents. Of the *nerves*, because nervous feebleness and nervous irritation, besides destroying one's own spring and motive power, bring one into ominous neighbourhood with dark temptations and terrible diseases. Of the *lungs* and other organs of speech, because a clear metallic voice is so indispensable to efficient utterance, and feeble lungs cannot but be accompanied by a sense of difficulty, and by general feebleness.

It is very certain that due attention to physical exercise is an essential condition of sustained vigorous preaching. The command to be "strong in the Lord" includes strength of body as well as strength of soul. A whole Saturday spent in the study, and particularly a whole Saturday night, is not favourable to that physical vigour which usually underlies good preaching. "The speakers that move the crowd," says Beecher, "men after the pattern of Whitefield, are usually men of very large physical development, men of very strong

digestive powers, and whose lungs have great aërating capacity. They are men of great vitality and recuperative force. . . . They are catapults, and men go down before them." Mr. Beecher has gone so far as to specify several points connected with food and feeding that require the notice of the preacher who would make the most of everything. To the excellence of his own health, the full free play of all his vital forces, he attributes not a little of the popularity he has enjoyed.

Some men may affect to despise these things, but it is a foolish affectation. Subordinate though their place may be, it is a real place notwithstanding; at least in every case where "the bow *abides* in strength, and the *arms of the hands* are made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob" (Gen. xlix. 24).[1]

[1] I am aware that some will dispute the position as to the connexion of good health and good preaching. And not without some plausibility. Of the three classes of powers of which our nature is made up—bodily, mental, and emotional,—it has been remarked that the development of any one class *to its utmost capacity* is seldom effected without damage to the rest. In the prize-fighter and the acrobat both mind and soul are stunted. In the senior wrangler, the development of intellect is commonly out of all proportion to that of the body and the soul. In the spiritual enthusiast, the intensity of the soul dwarfs mind and body. We may therefore find more spiritual intensity in one whose body is enfeebled—say by fastings and vigils—than in another. But even allowing for such exceptions, the general rule in ordinary life will remain but little modified.

CHAPTER VIII.

PULPIT STYLE.

THE subject of style, in connexion with the delivery of God's message, is one which some persons may think it were better to pass over entirely. Their fancy is that no good can come of instructions or rules fitted to make preachers nice as to the language in which they express themselves. If we should send a man through the town to announce that a house was on fire, should we lecture him on the style in which he was to make the announcement? If we should despatch a life-boat to the rescue of a shipwrecked crew, should we instruct the captain how to throw a figure of speech or two into his invitation? Only let preachers be in earnest, it is said, and they will have no difficulty in finding appropriate words. Let any man, indeed, only have something to say, and he will be sure to find suitable language :—

> "Cui lecta potenter erit res,
> Nec facundia deseret hunc, nec lucidus ordo."

Or as Milton puts it,—"When such a man would speak, his words, like so many nimble and airy servitors, trip about him at command, and in well-ordered files, as he could wish, fall aptly into their own places." This remark of Milton's may be true of a man after some five-and-twenty years' practice of the art of

speaking and of writing too; but there are few indeed who find it true at the beginning of their course, especially when the communication to be made is in the form of a sermon. Of course, when a man has only to shout "fire," or when a life-boatsman has only to invite shipwrecked sailors to jump on board, there is no need for instructions on style; but it is absurd to represent these acts as parallel to those to which the preacher is called from week to week, or to speak as if the simple monosyllable suitable to the one were a fair representation of the mode of address essential to the other.[1]

Style has often been defined "the dress of thought;" but it is a mistake to suppose that language and thought may be separated from each other as completely as dress may be separated from the body which it covers; and it is nearer the truth to say with Wordsworth, that style is the incarnation of thought. In point of fact, style, in common parlance, denotes the more conspicuous qualities, whether of thought or language, or of both combined, by which the writing or the speaking of any man is distinguished. Sometimes the two things are placed in antithesis, as when we say of some one that his thoughts are good but his style is bad; in which case we mean that he has taken no pains to set forth his leading thoughts in a suitable and attractive form. But more frequently the term style is used to denote qualities that belong more or less both to the thinking and the expression. If we say that one's

[1] "Let us not forget that to preach is to instruct. If we had only to drive the sinner to the foot of the Cross the Gospel might be soon unfolded. But the good news is found in many subjects. . . . To terrify is not every thing; it is not even a very small matter. We must touch the heart, and in order to do that we must instruct. There is a great number of souls that can only be gained to Christ at this price."—*Vinet.*

style is clear,—that is applicable to both. If we say that it is forcible, or that it is figurative, or that it is diffuse, or that it is concise, both elements are comprehended. The idea of the language is probably more prominent, because it is more conspicuous—it is palpable to the sense; but the language covers the thought, and the thought, to a large degree, determines the language. Style, therefore, is not a mere affair of words. It combines the properties both of the cuticle and the *cutis vera;* with an outer surface apparently detached, or detachable; but a lower layer, from which the outer is formed, in immediate connexion with the vital forces of the system.

Before proceeding to specific suggestions on pulpit style, it will be useful to offer a few remarks on the question, whether there be any fundamental difference between the style of conversation and the style of the pulpit? And also, whether there be any essential difference between the style of the pulpit, and other modes of public speaking—parliamentary, forensic, or general?

At first sight it might seem as if there were a fundamental difference between the style of the pulpit, especially in its higher flights, and the style of conversation. If men were to converse as they sometimes preach, it would be bombastic absurdity; if they were to preach as they usually speak, it would be bare, passionless, and tame in the extreme. But this may be, because their actual preaching is bombastic, and their actual conversation poor and tame. It is obvious that the conversational style has many advantages. It arrests attention; it keeps the voice natural; it obliges you to bear in mind your object, viz., to convince and persuade the person or persons addressed; it compels you, by an instinctive process in your own mind, to

adapt yourself to your audience, and to see that, as you advance step by step, you carry them along with you. These are very substantial advantages of the conversational style not to be lightly sacrificed. Is it possible then, on the basis of such a style, to rise to those heights which the public orator counts his peculiar domain—to become impassioned, flowing, poetical? The question is pretty nearly equivalent to this, Could such a style of speech become natural and appropriate in conversation? Can it be conceived as natural, that a friend, walking and talking to another friend, should get so raised above the ordinary level as to pour his mind out in sentences resembling the most eloquent periods of the greatest pulpit orators?

In theory we can discover nothing to prevent this supposition from being realized. But ordinarily there are insuperable hindrances to its being realized *in practice*. Thus, it is very seldom that any one would think of *preparing* to give expression, in conversation with a single person, to his fullest, richest, intensest thoughts and feelings on any subject, or of so arranging them that they should come out in the best possible order, and with the greatest possible force, each sentence and clause intensifying the rest. Further, the circumstances of an ordinary two-handed conversation, as we call it, prevent the rise of that excitement and enthusiasm which the presence of great numbers gives to a public speaker; they fail to supply that uplifting power which makes him forgetful of common things, and enables him to soar and to carry up his audience to a more ethereal region. An ordinary conversation, in a word, has a tying-down, or tethering effect on a speaker, and hence the bareness and tameness by which it is usually characterized. But fancy some man with a

great conversational gift, like Coleridge, thoroughly interested and thoroughly roused; the words of such a man will probably have as much of passion and poetry, of glowing warmth and flowing fulness, as the best periods of a sermon. May it not be, that the circumstances appropriate to the *pulpit* are designed to give to a speaker the benefit of that power that carries one upwards, and of that wider sweep and intenser feeling which belong to oratorical discourse?

This seems to be the true theory of style. The style for the pulpit is essentially the conversational, but it is the conversational with the added wings of an eagle, as it were, and with a capacity of uttering things, grander, richer and fuller, than would be practicable in actual conversation.

This view of the matter receives strong confirmation, if not actual demonstration, from the range and capacity of feeling and expression which conversation commands in our great dramatical, poetical, and fictional writers. No one ever actually conversed as many of the characters of Shakespeare, Milton, or even of Sir Walter Scott converse. In point of fact, many of the most eloquent, imaginative, and impassioned passages in the English language occur in the form of dialogues. And yet no one, with common sense, accuses these brilliant authors of making their characters talk bombastically or unnaturally. The explanation is what has just been adverted to:—they take advantage of the *theoretical* capacity of the conversational style to make it express what, by reason of practical drawbacks and difficulties, it hardly ever does express, in actual life. They make men and women talk, not as they do talk in the work-a-day world, but as it would be suitable for them to talk under the influence of excited feelings, if they had easy

command of the richest stores of language, and if this great faculty of speech were so common as not to excite the idea of a prodigious effort or of an affected display. Now it is just these conditions, so seldom realized in actual conversation, that preaching and other forms of oratorical speech admit of. And it is the fact of their admitting of these conditions that justifies the use of that full, ornamented and impassioned language, which in other circumstances would be so bombastic and unnatural.

This view of the proper foundation of the pulpit style receives further confirmation from the fact that all our Lord's discourses were framed on the conversational model. The Sermon on the Mount is conversational, and it is instructive to observe how, as he goes on, he seems to get nearer to the people—how the plural *ye*—"Ye are the salt of the earth"—passes into the singular *thou*—"If *thy* right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee." But in not a few instances we see our Lord, in his discourses, rising up to what is more strictly the oratorical region, becoming impassioned, flowing, and poetical, holding his hearers in breathless attention, exercising all the fascinating influence of the highest eloquence.

If we inquire into the practice in other forms of public speaking, we shall find a similar state of things. In parliament, on the platform, or at the bar, great speakers start from the conversational level, securing thereby the attention and the sympathy of their audiences, and it is only as their feelings warm, or as the subject unfolds itself, or as the audience inspires them, that they rise to the oratorical heights. So also with great preachers. Their opening sentences are almost invariably sentences that might have been spoken in

conversation, either with a single hearer, or a party of half-a-dozen. Take at random any of the sermons of Whitefield, or Mr. Spurgeon, or Mr. Robertson of Brighton, and, you will find this remark wonderfully verified. In your own case it will be of inestimable service to fashion your preaching style on the conversational basis, understood as we have explained it. Start conversationally, and never for one moment forget that you are to preach *to* the people, and not merely to deliver a discourse before them. You are certain, by this means, to secure an attentive audience. You may or may not feel that you can spread your wings very wide, or carry them up to the higher realms of oratory. If you are not sure of yourselves in the upper regions, you will be content with the lower. You will feel it far better to establish the character of useful and instructive preachers than that of orators. Oratory is doubtless a most kingly gift; but for that very reason, its counterfeit is a contemptible abortion.

Proceeding now to the details of pulpit style, we shall confine our attention to what seem to be the four leading qualities, namely, Clearness, Force, Fulness, and Beauty. This may be taken also as the order of importance; plainness being undoubtedly the first requisite, and beauty almost as certainly coming in after the rest.

1. *Clearness* is the quality of plain and accurate representation, and obviously demands clear and accurate thinking. According to Cicero the first requisite of an orator is to know what he has to say. It would be flattering many speakers beyond their merits to suppose that they possess this requisite. The criticism once passed upon a preacher that "he aimed at nothing in particular—and he hit it," might be extended to not

a few. Vague in their thinking, they are equally vague in their writing. A foggy atmosphere does not admit of photographing, nor does a foggy mind admit of clearness. If an unblurred image is desired in photography, the atmosphere must be clear; if a lucid style is required in the pulpit, it must represent the thoughts of a lucid mind. "Reading," as Bacon has told us, "makes a full man, writing a correct man, and speaking a ready man." One of the chief uses of writing is that it puts a great pressure on a man to understand himself. Hurried extemporaneous writing has no such effect, and is worse than useless; nor can a conscientious preacher ever write a single page without asking himself as he goes over it what precisely he has been trying to say, and whether he has succeeded in saying it with the greatest possible clearness.

The object of *words* being to convey *ideas*, it is obvious that clearness is the most indispensable of all the qualities of style, just as transparency, or at least translucency, is the most indispensable of all the properties of glass. The first object of the public speaker is to find words that will most clearly express to his audience the ideas that he wishes to convey. Now it may be that the words that are absolutely most correct are not the words that are best adapted to this purpose. A botanist, *e.g.*, wishes to describe a plant to a non-botanist. The scientific terms are, of course, those which are absolutely the most correct, but to the non-botanist they are an unknown tongue, they convey no idea whatever. Consequently the botanist must try to find words intelligible to his hearer, that will convey to his mind the most accurate notion of the plant. So also it is with the preacher. He, too, has to bear in mind that in preaching his object is not merely to

express or record his ideas, but to *convey* them. If he were making out a scientifically-constructed record of truth, he would be warranted in using technical words, and other words, which, however, he must not use when his object is to convey truth to a miscellaneous audience. He must consider what terms his audience are likely to understand. He must think what illustrations will be likely to aid them. If he go beyond this mark, it must be exceptionally and cautiously, remembering that he runs the risk of failing in the first object of the public speaker,—failing to convey anything to his hearer's mind.

There are some forms of writing, and also of speaking, that are designed only for thoroughly educated audiences, and that admit, therefore, of the widest range of language. But preaching, in almost all instances, being addressed to a general audience, or an audience comprising many persons of limited education, cannot claim the same latitude. Hence the reason for that most valuable canon of preaching—to make use only of words in common circulation, and bearing clear and well-understood meanings. This is the true version of a rule often given, to use only words of Anglo-Saxon origin. Whether the words be of Saxon origin or not is of no consequence, provided they be in common use, and bear well-defined meanings. Our language is a compound of many dialects, and though the Anglo Saxon is doubtless the raciest and the most intelligible, it has no monopoly of these qualities. But that the words be in common use, and that they bear distinct meanings, is quite indispensable to a right pulpit style. Many an expression that would be quite in place in college essays, because it is the most correct expression of all, is out of place in a sermon, and the

preacher must learn the self-denial which leads him to avoid it. It is hardly credible how anxiously some writers and preachers search for common and well-understood words. It is said that Archbishop Tillotson was in the habit of reading his sermons to an illiterate old woman that lived with him, and altering all the phrases till he had brought them down to the level of her capacity. Some authors will go over a paper again and again for no other purpose than to find out whether more common and intelligible words or phrases could be substituted for any that they have used. It is a mistake to suppose that a style on which no pains have been bestowed is necessarily a clear one. The probability rather is that it is quite the reverse.

There is a style of writing characteristic of half-educated persons, which no man of taste and training can too carefully avoid. It consists in the use of grand words instead of plain words, in heaping gaudy tropes and other figures of speech on subjects that are in little need of illustration,—in accumulating long adjectives and other expletives, not for the purpose of conveying or elucidating thought, but of making a great blaze of oratorical fireworks. Such writers, some one has said,

> "Mistake the language of the nation
> For long-tailed words in -osity and -ation."

I have heard wonderful specimens of this style at the soirees of young men's associations. I have heard it, in lesser degree, in sermons by half-educated preachers, that have got a smattering of scholarship, and deem it right to parade a fact which certainly would not be discovered from any evidence either of mental discipline or of purity of taste and manners. It is hardly possible to convey too strong a warning against any approach to

this style. Words that convey no definite meaning; expletives introduced merely to round a sentence, but not to express a thought; tawdry metaphors, heaped on each other with barbaric profusion; ornamental expressions that draw attention to themselves but give no increase of vividness to the meaning, are all to be given to the pruning-hook, and remorselessly cast into the fire.

2. Another quality of style essential to effective preaching is *Force.*

That style has a certain *dynamical* power must be admitted by every one who considers how much more impression is usually made by a truth pithily and concisely put, than by the same truth expressed diffusely. The gnomic or proverbial form of expression derives much of its force from this circumstance; if you say, *e.g.,* "Fools and their money are soon parted," you send the truth further than if you put your meaning thus:— "When persons of a facile disposition are in possession of funds, they show a tendency to disperse them rapidly." "The proper study of mankind is man" is more forcible than—"Among the studies which are most suitable for us, the constitution of the human mind, the development of human character, and indeed everything which bears on man's life and welfare, is one of the most important." But in respect of this quality, force, as of its predecessor, plainness, we remark a close connexion between the thinking and the speaking. Intensity of thought and feeling gives birth to force of expression. It is the man that thinks deeply and feels strongly that expresses himself forcibly. Without deep and strong action of the soul, there may be an affected strength of expression, there may be exaggeration and a copious use of superlative degrees, but there is not likely to be

much of real force,—not much of that dynamic power that sends truth far under the surface, and leaves it in full possession of the soul.

In particular, the quality of forcible style stands connected with *a penetrative habit of mind*, which, having gone itself to the heart of things, aims at communicating its own experience to others. Partly from mental indolence, or mental superficiality, and partly from the effects of a hurried mode of life, which leaves little time for acts requiring leisure, most men, and it is to be feared many preachers, content themselves with superficial views and impressions of truth. Let us take, for example, the truth of man's lost state by nature. The knowledge which many persons seem to have of this truth consists in what they have gathered up, here and there, as it were, around it,—they know something of its terrible aspect in this direction and in that,—as involving punishment, perpetual inward disorder, the loss of all that one was created for, the annihilation of all hope and joy. But some have penetrated far deeper into this truth, and gained a much more intense experience of it. They have *felt* separation from God. They have felt like shipwrecked sailors in mid-ocean cast on a lonely rock, with all the agencies of destruction closing on them, and none but God in heaven to help them. They have looked, oh! how wistfully, on this side and on that, and found no helper—for helper they cannot have but One; and that, the displeased God, the angry Judge, whose gracious face they have not yet learned to look on. He who teaches this truth after such an experience, after so penetrating a knowledge of it, will teach it right forcibly. Taught himself by the Holy Spirit, his words will have the penetrative power,—they will not play upon the surface, but go right to the

core, and stick there. And this penetrative power may be exercised with a great absence of noise and fuss. Sometimes the calmest men have most of it. With little appearance of eloquence, they are enabled to find the surest avenues of the heart, and plant their weapon in its inmost citadel.

It may be remarked, further, that a forcible style does not harmonize with a speculative or a very subjective mode of thought.[1] It pertains to strongly objective truth, and associates itself with great realities. Rationalism, with its perpetual atmosphere of doubt and uncertainty, is most unfavourable to it. The message of God's Word, so objective, so momentous, so solemn in all its bearings, is admirably adapted to it. He that is enabled to penetrate to the heart of those stirring truths which form that message, can hardly fail to become master of a forcible mode of stating them. He that holds them superficially and lightly cannot be expected to project them forcibly. In point of fact, as has been well remarked by Dr. Shedd, "All the high and commanding eloquence of the Christian Church has sprung out of an intuition like that of Paul and Luther,—a mode of conceiving and speaking of God and man, and their mutual relations, that resulted entirely from the study of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures."[2]

3. The next quality of style which we proceed to notice is *Fulness* or *Amplitude*. Even in written or printed composition, it is desirable that this quality be found in some measure; but for spoken or oral discourse it is still more important. It is not enough that a thought be correctly presented to an audience; it ought to be presented in such a manner that if possible all the audience shall have a full perception of it. And it is

[1] See Shedd, p. 75.

[2] Shedd, p. 82.

not enough that it be so presented as to command a certain attention from the audience; it ought to be so presented that if possible it shall command due attention from all the audience. One of the greatest difficulties of a public speaker is to make an enduring impression on the attention of his audience; it is comparatively easy to gain their attention for the moment, it is much more difficult to get a truth to abide in the mind, with its full measure of impression. To secure such objects a measure of amplitude is indispensable. The speaker who has the power of amplifying has a great advantage in dealing with an audience, provided always he does not carry his faculty to the point of weariness, but knows when to stop.

There is a rough analogy here between the process of bodily and that of mental digestion. It is remarked by physiologists that the stomach does not operate with advantage on the mere essences of food. Any one trying to live on Liebig's essence of meat, pure and simple, would be rendered helpless in an exceedingly short period. Horses, as Whately has remarked, cannot be fed on oats and beans alone;—straw or hay must be added to distend the stomach and enable it to act with advantage. So also with the mental stomach. If thought be presented in the most condensed form, the process of assimilating it is too exhausting. Something corresponding to the straw or hay is necessary to make it more easily digestible; not, however, in the Apostle's sense of "wood, hay, and stubble"—a metaphor applicable to building but not to feeding. We have said that this is especially needed in spoken discourse. When a reader is dealing with what is written or printed, he can go back—he can read again and again, and this process of repetition furnishes the

needed assistance for mental digestion. But when you are listening to spoken discourse, you have no such resource. You lie at the mercy of the speaker, and if he be wholly destitute of the faculty of expansion, and try to hurry you on unrelieved from one general truth to another, the fatigue of following him will be found excessive, and the effort to attend will speedily be given up.

The greatest orators and most effective preachers have always been masters of the art of expansion. Our blessed Lord has set us a memorable example. It was not enough for him to say what we were to do if our right eye should offend us; the same instruction is repeated *totidem verbis* with reference to the right hand. It was not enough, in rebuke of distrustful care, to point to the fowls of heaven; the same lesson is immediately enforced by a reference to the lilies of the field. The woe denounced on Chorazin and Bethsaida is followed by the woe against Capernaum; the possibility of an impression being made on Tyre and Sidon, as a rebuke to the people, is paralleled by the same thing in the case of Sodom; and the example of Jonah is followed by that of the Queen of Sheba as a reproof of the blindness that failed to recognise the Son of God. The same thing may be readily traced in all the oratorical books of Scripture. "A man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land" (Isa. xxxii. 2). One great fundamental truth is here, but with a fourfold diversity of aspect and application. Or let us go to St. Paul's wonderful account of the resurrection. "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the

stars, for one star differeth from another star in glory. *So also* is the resurrection of the dead; it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body" (1 Cor. xv. 41-44).

Of modern orators, Burke, and of modern preachers, Chalmers, have shown most fertility in the quality of expansion. In the case of Chalmers the quality is so remarkable as to become oppressive. The door swings so much on its hinges that we become impatient for a forward motion. But the view presented of the truth in hand is very full and complete; we cannot misunderstand it, and we can hardly forget it. The very exaggeration of the quality in Chalmers draws attention to its importance, as one of the chief attributes of really effective discourse; while at the same time it serves to warn us of the danger of the opposite extreme of pleonasm and verbosity. Chalmers, however, often atones for excessive amplitude by a happy instance of terseness. By means of a striking antithesis, he sometimes gathers into a single line the substance of many pages. The same thing may be noticed in Burke, and it has a most happy effect on the hearer.

Of the various methods of expansion we cannot speak at length. Resolving the general into the particulars which compose it; putting the same truth in various forms (*e.g.*, positive, negative, interrogative, interrogative-negative); repetition with variety; examples and illustrations—are some of the methods that will most naturally present themselves. The combination of the various methods is obviously most desirable; but in this, as in most other matters, the best speakers will be guided rather by their instincts, quickened by

familiarity with the best writers, than by any rules which can be given for their direction.

4. Last in the roll of the more important elements of pulpit style we place *Beauty*. By assigning this place to it, we protest equally against those who exalt it as if it were of supreme importance, and those who depreciate it as unworthy of a thought. Beauty, beyond all doubt, is a divine creation, and, though in quite different forms, it abounds equally in God's revelation of himself in the book of nature, and in the book of revelation. It has a conspicuous place in the earth around us, with all its manifold variety of form and colour, its tinted skies and great vault of blue; and it has a place not less conspicuous in the Bible, with its Song of Solomon, its psalms and poems innumerable, its gorgeous visions, and that wonderful music of words which even a translation does not sweep away. And it is on the basis of this style, in a form touched with corresponding beauty, that devout souls love most to hear the lessons of divine truth from human lips. Where this beauty is wholly wanting, there is no provision for that craving which is so attracted by the allegories of John Bunyan, or the poems of Milton or of Cowper. A tinge of beauty in style is like a streak of colour in nature, and without adding anything directly nutritious, gives to truth a relish, and to the mind a refreshment, that greatly increase the enjoyment of instruction. There are undoubtedly preachers who have no conscious relish for it themselves, and never take any pains to produce it. Let such preachers, at the least, beware of the weakness of disparaging in others a quality of which they are destitute themselves. In any case beauty of style is rather the finishing touch, than an essential part of the process of uttering thought; but without it

the expression of truth must be imperfect, deficient in one, though not the most important, of the elements of what the Psalmist calls "the beauty of the Lord" (Ps. xxvii. 4).

The subject which we have discussed in this chapter is sometimes exposed to disparaging strictures. A preacher who bestows pains on the style of his discourse is supposed to aim only at decking it out, or as the phrase goes, "polishing his periods;" and to occupy one's-self with such a task is represented as sheer trifling with the great truths of salvation. But in point of fact, there is no reason whatever why pains bestowed on style should be regarded as having no higher aim than that of polishing it on the one hand, or making it elaborate on the other. The true idea is precisely the reverse. Let pains be bestowed on the style in order to render it more simple and transparent, —a more exact and faultless vehicle of truth; to clear away redundancies, to strengthen what is weak and supply what is lacking; to place the links of argument in the best possible order, and to find ways of entering the human heart by all the various avenues of approach with which God has furnished it. Certain it is that no small pains have been used for such ends by some of the highest masters of eloquence. Benjamin Franklin used to read the *Spectator*, and try to reproduce it from his notes, in order to acquire the style of Addison; William Pitt, by his father's advice, used to translate aloud into English from books written in other languages, in order to find readily the right English word. Mr. Bright, in the days of his finest speeches, was in the habit of studying carefully the great classical poets of England, finding that they helped him to correctness and fulness of diction. Gibbon is said to have written

the first chapter of the *Decline and Fall* three times before he was pleased with it. Lord Brougham re-wrote the peroration of his speech on the Queen's trial eighteen times. Our habits have become so rapid, that such statements can hardly be believed by us. But such indications of the pains used by secular orators and authors to place their thoughts in the most impressive form, ought not to be lost on those whose office deals with the great truths of salvation.

With one other remark on this subject we must conclude; let it have all the weight of a closing counsel. Of the style of which we have spoken, the sacred Scriptures furnish the best and most striking examples; nor can there be any better means of forming and enriching a pulpit style than familiarity with their contents, and that power of apt and graceful quotation of their language, which not only gives authority to a discourse, but makes it sparkle as with precious stones.

CHAPTER IX.

TEXT, PLAN, AND STRUCTURE OF THE SERMON.

THE first business of the preacher, when commencing his preparation for a specific act of preaching, is to select his subject and his text. From time immemorial, sermons, or addresses to congregations on religious truth and duty, have usually been founded upon passages of Scripture. Our Lord himself may be said to have given his seal to this practice, when, in the synagogue of Nazareth, he founded his address on the passage which he had read from the prophet Isaiah. On the other hand, the Sermon on the Mount had no single text as its subject, although texts not a few were made use of in the course of it. St. Paul's address at Athens was founded on the inscription upon the altar "To the unknown God." It is not indispensable therefore that every address on religious topics should be founded on a Scripture text, especially where the divine authority of Scripture is not admitted. But where the Bible is accepted as God's revelation, there are many considerations in favour of the practice, and as it has happily obtained the sanction of use and wont,[1] it is very desirable that it should be continued. Thus—

[1] The schoolmen in the middle ages occasionally selected a passage from Aristotle in their addresses to Christian assemblies (Riddle, *Christian Antiquities*, p. 448). In a recent book called *Unorthodox London*, a Comtian religious service is described in which the text was from Theodore Parker. Such exceptions only show the propriety of the rule.

(1.) It is a perpetual recognition of the preacher's function as a preacher of the Word. It is a symbol of his office and of his work—a token that he is there, not to set forth his own notions and fancies, but to declare God's message—that, in a stricter sense than was verified by Balaam, "he cannot go beyond the word of the Lord to say less or more."

(2.) The text is a perpetual reminder to the people of the authority of Scripture. It is a testimony that the Word of God, as contained in the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him. The Bible is appealed to as the one fountain of truth regarding salvation : "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. viii. 20).

(3.) Texts are adapted to be easily remembered by the people. They are the memorials as well as the subjects of sermons. They are the anchors which prevent the whole discourse from drifting away into the realms of forgetfulness. And while the text suggests the sermon, the sermon often throws light on the text. Many a text seems to have a new force and brightness, after a preacher has opened it up. It sticks to the conscience and to the heart, and sometimes becomes the kindling spark of new life in the soul. It recurs again and again to such a hearer, amid the manifold changes and trials of life; and as its light was the first gleam of heaven that fell upon his soul, so, peradventure, it is the last that gladdens and sustains him as he closes his sojourn, strikes his tent, and breasts the river.

(4.) Texts are great helps to variety in preaching. It would be almost impossible without them to construct so many religious addresses as the preacher re-

quires to deliver. They enable him to take up the various classes of topics embraced in "the whole counsel of God." And when viewed in their connexions, they are not only suggestive of suitable topics, but of suitable modes of treatment; they are guiding-posts to the preacher, guiding himself, and enabling him to guide others, to the full knowledge of God's will.

It is not meant that these objects are accomplished in all cases by the giving out of a verse of Scripture before beginning a religious discourse. Unless the preacher is penetrated by the thought that in giving out his text he utters God's word, and unless his use of it is in entire harmony with this thought, the text will no more lend authority to the discourse than a cross over the door will give sacredness to a theatre.

If, however, the right use of a text be adopted to serve the purposes now enumerated, the choice of it should evidently be made with care. It ought not to be announced, as was said of Bourdaloue, merely that the preacher may show his skill in getting rid of it as soon as possible. And when it is announced as the authoritative subject of discourse, the preacher ought, with the most scrupulous conscientiousness, to attach to it no other meaning than that which he believes that the Holy Spirit meant it to bear. Nothing can be more irreverent or inexcusable than the handling of texts after an odd or fantastic fashion. Unfortunately there are various ways in which this has been done. Some preachers have actually descended to punning upon their text. A New England minister, in the colonial period of the United States, is said to have once preached before an unpopular Governor (by courtesy styled "his Excellency") from the passage in Job—"Though his excellency mount up to the heavens,

and his head reach unto the clouds, yet he shall perish for ever like his own dung."[1] Some preachers again stretch the principle of accommodation so as to bring out of a text a lesson which there is not the faintest reason to believe that the Holy Spirit intended it to convey. Thus, the nine-and-twenty knives, which Ezra tells us were restored by Cyrus to the Jews, have been taken to represent nine-and-twenty kinds of Providential judgments; the old cast clouts and rotten rags which Jeremiah put under his arm-holes have been made to stand for the stained righteousness of the sinner, while Ebedmelech's words have been interpreted as showing that Christ's was the only true righteousness for him.[2] The offence in such cases has not been lessened by the fact that the preacher might have found other passages expressly affirming his doctrine, and might have used some of these words or incidents as ordinary illustrations, whereas for mere fantastic and sensational purposes he has given to words of the Holy Spirit a sense unwarranted by the Spirit himself.

It is an exaggeration of this fault when words of Scripture have been interpreted grotesquely to support doctrines or applications of doctrines not in harmony with the Word; as when the two pence in the parable of the Good Samaritan have been explained of the two Sacraments—Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Perhaps the most monstrous instance of this kind ever heard of was when an English clergyman in the seventeenth century preached upon the Divine right of Episcopacy from the text,—"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" "For Paul and Silas," said he, "are called Sirs, and

[1] Shedd, p. 171.
[2] Moore's *Thoughts on Preaching*, p. 104.

Sirs being in the Greek *κύριοι*, and this in strict translation meaning 'Lords,' it is perfectly plain that at that time Episcopacy was not only the acknowledged government, but that bishops were peers of the realm, and so ought to sit in the House of Lords." [1] *Se non e vero e bene trovato.* A parallel to this is said to have occurred when a preacher in the days of Charles II. established the Divine right of kings from the text, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." "For it is not said, Seek first the *parliament* of God, or the *army* of God, or the *committee of safety* of God, but the *kingdom* of God." [2] Such extreme instances of "courting a grin, when you should win a soul," are not likely to be reproduced in our more sober age, but they may serve to put you on your guard against any and every use of a text which is inconsistent with the great purpose for which texts are designed. The chief temptation in our time lies in the direction of unauthorized spiritualizing. Passages in the Old Testament are referred to Christ simply because they appear to fit him, and doctrines of the New Testament, developed only in the last period of the later dispensation, are ingeniously discovered at the very dawn of the earlier. Such a practice opens the door to all the vagaries of Origen or Swedenborg, and is inconsistent with the true purpose of texts—honouring God's Word as the great fountain of authority and light, and showing that it is not his own fancies that the preacher dispenses, but the message he has received from his Master.

The choice of a text therefore on every occasion which admits of a choice may surely be regarded as a suitable matter on which to ask Divine direction by

[1] Shedd, p. 107. [2] *Ibid.*

prayer. For if you consider how a particular text may possibly become to some hearer a message of life, it becomes awfully important that you should take all possible care to choose the right one. The answer to the prayer which you offer may come in the form of a strong bright light cast upon some particular text, enabling you to see how it may become the germ of a useful discourse; or in the form of a conviction that your people are for certain reasons in need of a sermon on some particular subject; or in the form of providential occurrences that give a definite direction to your mind. It is unsafe to rely on vague impressions, unsupported by reasons, as answers to prayer. Those who trust to such impressions are prone to the temptation of mistaking strong feelings of their own hearts for intimations of the mind of God.

Divine direction having thus been sought, the preacher is not sent out to roam at large through the wide fields of Scripture in search of a text. A search begun in so helpless a manner would probably consume a large share of the time available for the composition of the discourse. We suppose our preacher to have accumulated a store of texts—texts that in the course of his homiletical reading have struck him as the right key-notes for sermons, and on which perhaps he has already stored some thoughts of his own. We regard this habit of such importance, such immense avail for saving time, and facilitating work, that we must again take the opportunity of urging it in the strongest terms. "How do you obtain your texts?" said a friend on one occasion to the eminent young preacher, Thomas Spencer, of Liverpool. He replied, "I keep a little book, in which I enter every text of Scripture that comes into my mind with power and sweetness. Were I to dream

of a passage of Scripture, I should enter it, and when I sit down to compose, I look over the book, and have never found myself at a loss for a subject."[1] One caution, however, may be useful in reference to texts that have been stored in this manner. Very probably the flash that has brightened them, and made them suggestive to your minds of some useful train of thought, has fallen on them while you were meditating in the quiet of the evening, or while you were listening to a discourse, or while you were reading your English Bible. It may be that an examination of the original or an examination of the context might somewhat modify your view of the passage. The caution to be offered is, that before proceeding to construct a sermon on it, you make sure that your view of its import is in accordance with the original and with the context.[2] It

[1] Kidder's *Homiletics*, p. 83.

[2] It may be useful to give some instances of such mistakes:— Eccles. xii. 1, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." One is apt to lay great emphasis on the *now* of this verse, whereas on turning to the Hebrew Bible we find merely the simple copulative "and"—"and remember thy Creator." 1 Tim. ii. 8, "I will that men pray everywhere," looks like an exhortation to prayer in all places, whereas on turning to the original we find it is τοὺς ἄνδρας, "*the* men," in opposition to the women; it is the men who are always to offer prayer in public. Isa. i. 5, 6, "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint," etc., sounds vaguely as a statement of universal corruption, and is often so used in confession; whereas the context shows the meaning to be that chastisement has been so abundant as to leave no part of the body whole. 1 Cor. ii. 2, "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." This is often explained as meaning that the Apostle determined to exclude every other subject, and has no doubt led many conscientious men to narrow very much the scope of their preaching; whereas the original, "οὐ γὰρ ἔκρινά τι εἰδέναι ἐν ὑμῖν, εἰ μή," etc., "I did not resolve to know any thing among you except," etc., shows the meaning to be that this was the only topic that he made the subject of a fixed resolution; other topics might come in as occasion served, but to introduce "Jesus Christ and him crucified" he had fully and formally resolved.

is not at all unlikely that you may find yourselves mistaken; and in that case, painful though the sacrifice must be, your duty is plain and simple; you must take no advantage of an ambiguity in our translation, since an error of translators can never give to a statement the authority of God's Spirit.

In the selection of texts a preacher will of course be guided largely by regard to the species of discourse which he purposes to deliver. If it is to be an expository lecture, the text will probably be of considerable length, and if a sermon, it will be limited to a single verse, or a single clause. Where the old Scottish plan is adopted of delivering an expository discourse in the forenoon, followed by a sermon at the afternoon or evening service, it is desirable that for the sermon the text should be short and emphatic. If a lecture and sermon have both to be delivered without interval, by all means let a short text be sought; let the sermon also be short, and let it be constructed in the rapid, energetic method, so as to keep the people awake, and to present that variety which is as pleasing in spiritual as in material food. For sermons generally, a short pithy text is a great advantage. It falls on the people's ears with a sharp sound of authority; it is easily remembered, and it can readily be introduced at suitable passages of the discourse to clinch the preacher's reasonings or appeals. The practice, once so much thought of, of preaching more than one sermon on the same text, is now almost wholly discarded, as it is obviously prejudicial to freshness and variety, and preachers of good sense would rather leave out something that might be said, than incur the risk, or rather the certainty, of wearying their hearers.

In the choice of his text, the preacher will do well

to bear in mind the different objects which his preaching must contemplate, and the varied character which his sermons must accordingly bear. To probe the conscience, and thereby convince men of their sin and misery; to guide the anxious to the Saviour; to expound the great work of the Cross; to set forth the whole circle of Christian doctrine; to remove difficulties and objections; to enforce the claims of holiness; to elevate the standard of moral practice; to furnish encouragement for serving God suited to the circumstances and temptations of his people; to vindicate the ways of Providence; to point out the various forms of Christian usefulness, and urge them to begin and persevere in some of them, are among the objects which the preacher must aim at, and all require corresponding texts. Some sermons must be expository, some doctrinal, some argumentative, some practical, some experimental, some ethical, some hortatory, some minatory, and texts must be equally varied. It is natural for preachers to preach much in some particular line to which their own minds have a strong affinity. Some are fond of rousing their hearers, and some of delineating the inner life or experience of the believer, and some of setting forth his moral obligations; in other words, the preaching of some is awakening, of others experimental, and of others practical. It would not be right to discourage preachers from going more than others into subjects on which they are particularly at home, and which they are specially qualified to handle. But, on the other hand, no preacher should confine himself to one class of subjects, and no preacher should be content to leave topics untouched which are essential to a full message, and to the full edification of a congregation.

More particularly, it is requisite that every preacher should be able to handle the fundamental doctrines of revelation, to set forth the glad news of the kingdom of God. Texts containing the substance of God's message to the sinner, every Christian preacher ought to handle from time to time, although, as has already been said, such texts should not be the only texts which he does handle. "A man," says Dr. J. W. Alexander, "should begin early to grapple with great subjects. . . . The great themes are many. They are such as move the feelings; the great questions which have agitated the world, which agitate our own bosoms; which we should like to have settled before we die; which we should ask an apostle about if he were here. These are to general Scripture truth what great mountains are to geography. Some, anxious to avoid hackneyed topics, omit the greatest, just as if we should describe Switzerland and omit the Alps. Some ministers preach twenty years, and yet never preach on the judgment, hell, the crucifixion, nor on those great themes which in all ages affect children, and affect the common mind, such as the deluge, the intended sacrifice of Isaac, the death of Absalom, the parable of Lazarus. The Methodists constantly pick out these striking themes, and herein they gain a just advantage over us."[1]

Having selected his text, the next thing for the preacher is to mature the plan of his discourse. How is he to treat the text in question? What is to be his great aim in his sermon, and how is it to be accomplished? What topics is he to introduce, and in what order? What illustrations, elucidations, and applications of the text is he to embrace? How are the various topics to be arranged, so that not only a proper unity

[1] *Thoughts on Preaching*, p. 7.

shall pervade the whole, but the effect shall be cumulative, each successive part of the discourse tending more and more to the desired result, and the impression being most powerful just as the discourse is brought to a close?

Evidently it is no ordinary mental power that can really accomplish such an end as this. As Dr. Shedd remarks,—"A powerful methodizing ability implies severe tasking of the intellect, a severe exercise of its faculties, whereby it acquires the power of seizing the main points of a subject with the certainty of an instinct, and then of holding them with the strength of a vice—and all this, too, while the feelings and the imagination, the rhetorical powers of the soul, are filling out and clothing the structure with the vitality, and warmth and beauty of a living thing. This power of densely and quickly methodizing can be acquired only by diligent and persevering discipline; and hence it should be kept constantly before the eye of a preacher as an aim, from the beginning to the end of his educational and professional career. He cannot meet the demands which the public will make on him as its religious teacher, unless he acquires something of this talent; and he may be certain that, in proportion as he does acquire and employ it, he will be able to convey the greatest possible amount of instruction in the shortest possible space, and, what is of equal importance for the orator's purpose, he will be able to produce the strongest possible impression in the shortest possible amount of time."[1]

In view of the importance of the independent exercise of this methodizing power, some writers object very strongly to the use by young preachers of skeletons,

[1] *Homiletics and Pastoral Theology*, pp. 57, 58.

prepared by others, in the planning of their discourses. Such books as Simeon's *Horæ Homileticæ*, which contains several thousand skeletons, may have been of service to many ill-trained preachers; but, it is contended, they foster a habit of unwholesome dependence, and promote a most artificial and ineffective species of preaching. No preacher, with due independence of mind, who aims at something higher than the vocation of a huckster, who remembers that one of the chief reasons for a standing ministry in the Christian Church is, that the truth may be ever poured into men's hearts through the living thoughts and feelings, the personal convictions and experiences of the preacher, will condescend to be indebted to the machinery of others for what he ought to produce himself. But notwithstanding this, it does not follow that no use whatever is to be made of the plans or skeletons of others. There is no good reason why the same sort of use should not be made of skeletons that may be made of treatises and commentaries. The thing to be deprecated is, the preacher adopting another man's plan, or another man's anything, without passing it through the alembic of his own mind—without making it his own. The use to be made of commentaries and published sermons is similar. The German Commentaries that bear the name of Lange contain homiletical hints gathered from various quarters, which it would be simple absurdity to use wholesale, but some of which a preacher may find to be susceptible of amalgamation with his own plan and thoughts, and fitted to enrich and complete them. But every appearance of patchwork must be avoided. A unifying cement must give organic oneness and symmetry to the whole, otherwise it will be an old garment with a new patch—it will be new wine in old bottles. Having once looked

at what others have said, it will probably be best for him to throw aside their works, and let his own mind reproduce in substance whatever in them has appeared to be of value. In this way it will be more likely to be woven into the texture of his own mind, and reproduced with his own image and superscription.

On the subject of outlines or skeletons drawn up in preparation for any paper, Archbishop Whately remarks: "As a practical rule for all cases, whether it be an exercise that is written for practice sake, or a composition on some real occasion, it is necessary that an outline should be first drawn out—a *skeleton* as it is sometimes called—of the substance of what is to be said. The more *briefly* this is done, so that it does but exhibit the several heads of the composition, the better; because it is important that the whole of it be placed before the eye and the mind in a small compass, and be taken in, as it were, at a glance; and it should be written, therefore, not in *sentences*, but like a table of contents. Such an outline should not be allowed to *fetter* the writer, if in the course of the actual composition he find any reason for deviating from his original plan. It should serve merely as a *track* to mark out a path for him, not as a *groove* to confine him. But the practice of drawing out such a skeleton will give a coherence to the composition, a due *proportion* of its several parts, and a clear and easy arrangement of them, such as can rarely be attained if one begins by completing one portion of them before beginning to the rest. And it will likewise be found a most useful exercise for a beginner to practise—if possible under the eye of a judicious lecturer—the drawing out of a great number of such skeletons, more than he subsequently fills up; and likewise to practise the analysing

in the same way the compositions of another, whether read or heard."[1]

It is hardly possible to exaggerate the importance for a sermon of lucid order and symmetrical structure. This quality will often constitute one of the chief beauties of a discourse. Given a certain number of good thoughts—required the effect of two different methods of handling them. In one case, they are taken up helter-skelter, the preacher loses himself, goes abruptly from one topic to another, cuts the thread he is trying to unravel, produces a discourse to which might be applied the famous line of Pope, as once altered by Dr. Chalmers in reference to a celebrated controversial pamphlet—"a mighty maze, but *quite* without a plan." In the other case, the whole of the thoughts have been worked into a harmonious whole; bone has come to his bone and sinew to his sinew; every thought and every sentence is dovetailed into its predecessor, with tenon-and-mortice-like precision; a symmetrical structure, like that of the human body, is produced; a structure not only more beautiful in itself, but bearing a much closer resemblance to divine structures of every kind. "Thoughts," says Theremin, "at first present themselves as hard, brittle, and separate particles; the mind must seize them, and by grinding them incessantly upon each other crush them, until friction kindles the mass, and it resemble molten ore. The higher ideas, thrown as it were into this solution, take up the thoughts which belong to them, and which, now that they are fluid, obey the mystic power that attracts like to like, so that they form themselves into a firm chain."[2] "To attain the

[1] *Elements of Rhetoric*, pp. 16, 17.
[2] *Apud* Kidder, *Homiletics*, p. 112.

power," says another writer, "of readily fusing ideas, and combining them for oratorical effect, is an object worthy of the earnest endeavours of the public speaker. For this he should determine to put forth zealous and continued efforts.' [1]

In endeavouring to make the plan of a discourse more simple, orderly, and concise, the preacher may find it an advantage to leave out much that he has thought of introducing. Nor need he be afraid to do so. A sermon is not like a philosophical treatise, in which a subject must be viewed in all its length and breadth, and in all its aspects and relations. It is a persuasive address, in which, depending on the help of God, he tries to produce a particular impression. It is not necessary for this purpose to say everything at one time. It is not necessary, as Dr. Chalmers used to say, to take "a whole lift of theology" in every discourse. He may find use afterwards for materials that he cannot introduce now. It is quite true that at the commencement of his career a preacher is always afraid of a deficiency of material. He hardly knows how to fill up the time. But it is equally true that in practice the time *is* always filled up, and, as most hearers will tell you, more than the time. In this part of the island, we seldom hear of our sermons being considered too short. We hear a great deal of their being too long. And this complaint is often well founded. It is important to find out when a sermon *is* too long, where the attention of hearers flags, what part of it might with most advantage have been abbreviated. And generally it will be found, in the case of sermons of average ability, that it is somewhere in the middle of the discourse that the redundancy lies. The

[1] Kidder, p. 112.

introduction has excited some interest. But there was a somewhat barren region in the centre, and here eyes began to wander, and heads began even to nod. As the preacher warmed towards the close, the hearers became more attentive again. But the body of the discourse was too much of a dead level. The preacher did not advance fast enough, and people cannot bear their preacher to think more slowly than themselves, any more than in a procession they can bear the leaders to walk at a snail's pace before them. So, by a sort of tacit arrangement, they lay down for a little in the middle of the sermon, but got up and rallied round the preacher as he pushed on more nimbly at the end. Tediousness is surely a fault that might be much more avoided than it is. It may surely be classed among preventible evils, and prevented it would be if preachers had more manliness and self-control.

Some years ago some experiments were made by certain inspectors of schools and others, with the view of ascertaining for how long a period young persons were capable of giving bright and undivided attention to an oral statement made to them by another. The results were somewhat curious, but generally it was found that the period was very short. Beginning with the age of ten or twelve, the number of minutes during which undivided attention could be given was ascertained to be ten or twelve, and for every year of addition to the age of the young person, a minute had to be added to the length of the period—till you came to the age of twenty-five years, and the period of twenty-five minutes, which was believed to be the maximum period practicable. We do not attach much value to the so-called statistics, because they take no

account of a very important element, the degree of interest which the statement contained for the minds of the listeners, it being obvious as an axiom that people can listen far longer, and far more intensely, to what is of profound interest to them, than to matters of indifference. But it is well for preachers to bear in mind that the capacity of their hearers to give sustained attention is limited, and to try so to plan their discourses that that capacity shall not be unduly strained. Let the plan be simple, the arrangement natural, the style plain and forcible, the qualities that give interest to a discourse duly studied, and the length of the discourse suitably regulated. There are indeed preachers to whom any audience could listen for hours. It is said that when Jonathan Edwards preached on the unchangeableness of Christ, on the occasion of his installation at Princeton, though the sermon occupied a couple of hours, the people were so entranced that it seemed quite short. But it is not safe for any man, however high his estimate of himself, to assume without proof, that he belongs to this order of preachers; and as a general rule it will be better that the people should be sent away hungering for a little more rather than exhausted with too much.

The securing and sustaining the attention of the audience demands, at least on the part of ordinary preachers, continued care from first to last. Young preachers can have but a faint notion of the amount of inattention that prevails in an ordinary congregation. If men were as devout and earnest as they ought to be, it would be otherwise; but many persons are neither devout nor earnest. One class come into church with their minds preoccupied with the cares of this life. The farmer who has got his fields to sow in a few days, or

whose cattle are about to be despatched to the fair, or who is on the eve of making a new offer for his farm, is not in the best mood for giving sustained attention to a serious discourse. I have been told of an eminent publisher that the idea of his most successful publishing schemes occurred to him in church. The merchant hard pushed for the bill that has to be met to-morrow, has a serious rival to the preacher, however loud he may thunder from the pulpit. On the part of other hearers, well-disposed too, there is the tendency to dream. Alike in prayer, in praise, and in preaching, wandering thoughts are terrible foes to duty and edification. And it is quite wonderful how small a matter will send some persons off on the wings of reverie. "Your hearer," says an American writer, "hears you say, 'Some fastidious persons are like the old Pharisees, of whom our blessed Saviour said, "Ye strain at a gnat and swallow a camel." 'Yes,' says he to himself, 'the boys at school used to read it, Strain at a gate, and swallow a saw-mill. A great set of boys! Bill Moore married his cousin. Bart got drowned, poor fellow! Andy Snider went to Shenandoah to be a blacksmith. Bob M'Cowan is a poor bachelor,' and he chases these boys all over creation before he wakes up, arrests his reverie, and comes back to the subject of discourse."[1] This is a well-disposed hearer; many others are far less anxious than he. Again another class are continually diverted by external objects. Any one coming in late or going out sick is an irresistible object of attraction. Bare as our Presbyterian churches commonly are, they present the smallest possible number of distracting objects; yet I have been told by a very candid young lady that a board, containing the number

[1] Taylor's *Model Preacher*, p. 3.

in the tune-book of each tune to be sung, was far more attractive to her than the sermon.

To remedy this wandering habit, some preachers resort to the method of scolding. It might be more effectual if it were addressed to themselves. It is vain to demand attention if we cannot command it. To secure the attention of our hearers, we must make ceaseless endeavours to give interest to our discourse. The idea of our audience, and of the infirmities of our audience, must be ever present to our minds. "Eloquence," says Vinet, "is the gift of feeling with others what they think and feel, and of adapting the words and the movements of one's discourse to speak the thought of another. Eloquence rests upon sympathy. One is never eloquent except on condition of writing or speaking under the dictation of those whom he is addressing; it is our hearers who inspire us, and if this condition is not fulfilled, we may be profound and agreeable, but we shall not be eloquent. In order to be eloquent, we must feel the necessity of communicating our own life to others, and know intimately the chords which must be made to vibrate with them."[1]

Perhaps the result of all these suggestions may be to produce the impression that the due preparation of discourses is very difficult, and very troublesome. But let me ask you to revert to what was said already on the benefit of a high ideal. Let me also ask you to remember that pains and trouble at the commencement of an enterprise are often represented not only by high success, but by ease and comfort, towards the close. And further, let me remind you of what is of no small practical importance, that the pulpit at the present day has not by any means so unchallenged a field as it once

[1] *Homiletics*, p. 7.

had, and that the army of trained preachers now engage in their work, with an active and able body of volunteers at their side. Lay-preachers and exhorters of various kinds have risen up,—in some cases have been raised up,—with a remarkable capacity of plain, earnest, interesting address, so that some people are asking, What better are professional preachers, and what purpose is served by divinity halls, except to make them dull and heavy? Such questions are not likely to be asked by thoughtful persons, for, with all the excellences of some lay-preachers, the best of them are qualified to deal with but a slender portion of revealed truth; their power lies in but one kind of address. One may most cordially wish them God-speed, and yet be thankful for a trained and regular ministry, familiar with all the aberrations into which good as well as bad men have been led in the past, able to traverse the whole field of revealed truth, to bring forth out of their treasury things new and old, and to present in due balance and proportion all that bears upon the welfare of man. But just because the volunteers are so popular, the regular ministry must look well to their work. A minister must be more than a mere lay-preacher. He must be capable of presenting God's message in all its breadth and fulness, as well as in its pointed and burning significance. He must be a skilled labourer, not merely a rough, though it may be vigorous, apprentice; and his skill must be the result of much intellectual discipline, combined with manifold grace and spiritual wisdom—a knowledge of man, and a knowledge of God—chastened by the spirit of the little child, and an unfaltering dependence on the grace of God.

CHAPTER X.

INTRODUCTION, DIVISION, AND CONCLUSION.

THE different parts of a sermon correspond pretty nearly to the different parts of an oration, as they were long ago laid down by Aristotle—the introduction, the proposition, the proof, and the conclusion. The introduction, of course, prepares the way for the rest; the proposition announces the topic to be handled; the proof contains what it is deemed proper to say in the way of establishing it; and the conclusion is designed to rivet it on the attention of the hearer. The opening sentences of a sermon correspond to the introduction; then, more or less formally, the preacher announces the the proposition, or subject to be handled; the divisions or heads, if such are needed, indicate the considerations which he brings forward in support of his proposition; and the conclusion is generally an endeavour to press the subject practically on the heart and conscience of his audience. In offering a few remarks on these several parts of a discourse, we do not commit ourselves to the position that they are all to be presented to the audience formally and specifically, as a logician would present the parts of a syllogism. On the contrary, they are often best treated when they are not formally

enunciated; formality and uniformity being among the things which the preacher has most need to shun.

I. The Introduction.—It is seldom wise to plunge, without introduction, into the heart of a religious discourse. Introductions are perhaps less needed in platform speeches, or in political harangues; and in law-courts they can often be dispensed with altogether, especially if the pleader is addressing himself to a judge. The reason is, that the purpose of an introduction is to bring up the audience to a point of view suitable for considering the subject to be handled; to bring the hearers into sympathy with the speaker, and to get them to take an interest in the subject. In the case of platform and political speeches, and in the case of pleadings from the bar, this is less needed than in the case of sermons, because hearers usually are more ready to take an interest in the former than in the latter. Nevertheless, even in sermons, introductions ought to be brief. The limits of a sermon do not admit of a lengthened introduction. In all circumstances, indeed, anything which is only of a preliminary nature, when spun out unduly, becomes intolerably tedious, and exposes one to the criticism said to have been passed on John Howe by a good woman, one of his hearers,—"He took so long to lay the cloth, that I despaired of the dinner."

The introduction to a sermon has been sometimes called the preacher's cross, being the part with which he has often most difficulty, and which he finds it hardest to do well. It will serve to lessen the difficulty if we notice some of the kinds of introductions used by preachers, and the principles on which they depend. These are very diversified, and what we now notice are rather samples, than a complete enumeration.

1. Some begin by indicating the connexion of their text with the context. This is what may be called the exegetical method; it is the favourite method of scholarly minds, and the method to which students almost invariably resort. Canon Liddon, for example, hardly ever deviates from it. It is well suited for sermons of which instruction is the leading object, and almost indispensable in expository lectures; and it is especially appropriate when the light thrown by the context on the text gives it a peculiar vividness and force, and thus makes it take hold of the attention and the interest of the hearers. Such a text, for example, as "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord," (Isa. i. 18)—has a striking light thrown on it from the fact that it follows an elaborate and frightful delineation of wickedness, which might have been expected to be followed up by a denunciation of doom, rather than an offer of infinite mercy. So also the text, "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone," etc. (Isa. xxviii. 16), follows a frightful representation of the reckless guilt of the men of Jerusalem, who were making a covenant with death and an agreement with hell. But for the most part, tracing the connexion is not a very effective mode of introduction in the case of the majority of hearers. It is only the more advanced members of congregations, those who are habitually attentive, that care much either about context or connexion. For ordinary hearers something more arresting is necessary. In the case of sermons, it is desirable, too, in general, that the text be *self-contained*—flashing out clearly with its own bright light, and announcing its lesson with that clear, definite ring which marks authority, and commands attention.

2. Another form of introduction connects the topic

of the text with some wider subject, the importance of which is universally admitted. It refers the species to the genus. It announces the general law of which the text furnishes an instance, exciting the interest which is usually connected with successful generalization. Thus a sermon by a distinguished living preacher on Paul's words to King Agrippa, "I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds" (Acts xxvi. 29), begins by adverting to the power which Christianity has ever evinced of influencing all classes of society, the highest as well as the lowest, and notices the proof of its Divine origin and marvellous quality furnished in this, its all-pervading influence,—its power to turn the world upside down, its influence on human laws, the tone it gives to literature, the features it imparts to the character even of its bitterest opponents, so that men who in heart have never bowed to Christ are constrained to glory in the very name of Christian. All this tends to throw interest on that approach to Christianity which Agrippa made, and which gave rise to the noble words of Paul. It may be remarked, however, that it is still the more thoughtful class of minds that are impressed by this mode of introduction. It is only thoughtful minds that appreciate the principle of generalization—the referring of the species to the genus, the indication of a kinship among facts or phenomena apparently unconnected. But the interest which the exhibition of this law does create in such minds is very remarkable; and when the thing is well done, when the connexion established is clear and self-commending, the result is singularly satisfactory—the preacher has laid for himself a solid foundation, and established a claim to the

respectful attention and favourable consideration of his audience.

3. Perhaps it is the same principle—the interest excited in resemblances among things apparently unlike—that makes an *analogy* a very popular and effective way of beginning a discourse. Thus John Knox, in a sermon on *The Source and Bounds of Kingly Power*, founded on a passage in the twenty-sixth chapter of Isaiah (vers. 13-21) in which the prophet seems sometimes to bow before the storm of judgment, and sometimes to resist it and lay hold of God's mercy, thus begins (in a sentence, however, which is too long and involved for an introduction), "As the skilful mariner, being master, having his ship tossed with a vehement tempest and contrary winds, is compelled oft to traverse [tack], lest that, either by too much resisting to the violence of the waves, his vessel might be overwhelmed; or, by too much liberty granted, might be carried whither the fury of the tempest would, so that his ship should be driven upon the shore, and made shipwreck; even so doth the prophet Isaiah in this text, which now you have heard read." A much simpler instance is the following, by Mr. Robertson of Brighton, the text being (Gal. vi. 6, 7), "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap,"—"There is a close analogy between the world of nature and the world of spirit. They bear the impress of the same hand; and hence the principles of nature and its laws are the types and shadows of the Invisible, just as two books, though on different subjects, proceeding from the same pen, manifest indications of the thought of one mind, so the worlds visible and invisible are the two books written by the same finger, and governed by the same idea."

4. A more popular way of employing analogy in the

introduction is to start with an *anecdote*, or matter of fact. If it be really pertinent, and not introduced sensationally, it is very useful; only it makes it difficult to keep up the rest of the discourse at the same pitch of interest. Thus Dr. Arnold commences his sermon on the text, "The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light,"—"It is a remarkable story, told by the poet Cowper of himself, that when he was a young man, and living in London, where his companions were not only persons of profligate life, but of low and ungodly principles, they always had a great advantage over him when arguing upon the truth of Christianity, by reproaching him with the badness of his own life. In fact, it appears that his life at that time was quite as bad as theirs; and they used to upbraid him for it, telling him that it would be well for him if they were right and he were wrong in their opinions respecting the truth of the gospel; for if it were true, he certainly would be condemned on his own showing."

In some cases, the anecdote or matter of fact is introduced sideways, as something well known, and hardly needing to be stated directly; as when Thomas Adams begins his sermon on Faith, Hope, and Charity, thus—"When those three goddesses, say the poets, strove for the golden ball, Paris adjudged it to the Queen of Love. Here are three celestial graces in a holy emulation, if I may so speak, striving for the chiefdom; and our apostle gives it to Love. The greatest of these is Charity." So also a French orator, Fléchier, in a funeral sermon on Marshal Turenne,—taking his text, however, from the Apocrypha—starts in a highly oratorical strain by referring to the words of the Jews on hearing of the death of Maccabæus—"Why is that

great man dead, who saved the people of Israel?"—drawing a parallel between the desolation and despair that prompted the question of the Jews and the feelings of the French nation on the death of Turenne.

5. It may happen that an introduction is furnished, not by indicating a hidden analogy, but a hidden difference. Instead of connecting it with something to which it has an affinity, real though not obvious, it may be useful to separate it from something with which it seems to be identified, but is not. Thus Mr. Robertson of Brighton, preaching on the loneliness of Christ (John xvi. 31, 32): "There are two kinds of solitude; the first consisting of insulation of space, the other of isolation of the spirit. The first is simply separation by distance. . . . The other is loneliness of soul."

So also a sermon by another preacher on Phil. i. 23, "I am in a strait betwixt two," etc.—"The two things that St. Paul was in a strait between are not those which most men are in a strait between. Most men who are in any strait in connexion with religion are in a strait between Christ and the world, between earth and heaven, between the broad road that goes down to destruction, and the narrow path that leadeth to life. . . . But the things that St. Paul was in a strait between are quite different from these. His hesitation lay between the service of Christ here and the full enjoyment of him hereafter; between this life, with all its drawbacks, but its noble opportunity of Christian usefulness, and the life to come, so perfect in its blessedness, so glorious in its rewards."

6. In other cases, the introduction is furnished by some special and undeniable reason for giving attention to the lesson of the text. Tillotson, for example,

begins his sermon on the Resurrection by a reference to the fact that the doctrine has been much opposed and run down :—"The resurrection of the dead is one of the great articles of the Christian faith; and yet it hath happened that this great article of our religion hath been made one of the chief objections against it. There is nothing that Christianity hath been more upbraided withal, both by the heathens of old and by the infidels of later times, than the impossibility of this article. So that it is a matter of great consideration and consequence to vindicate our religion in this particular. For if the thing be evidently impossible, then it is highly unreasonable to propose it to the belief of mankind." A similar, but rather sharper instance may be given from Chillingworth, who rouses attention to his sermon on the perilous times of the last days by thus beginning :—"To a discourse on these words, I cannot think of any fitter introduction than that wherewith our Saviour sometime began a sermon of his—'This day is this Scripture fulfilled.' And I would to God that there were not great occasion to fear that a great part of it may be fulfilled in this place."

The circumstances that give special interest to a text, or to a subject, are extremely various. The very brevity of a text may be turned to account. The first of Dr. J. H. Newman's *Parochial Sermons*, founded on the text, "Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord," begins with the remark—"In this text it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit to convey a chief truth of religion in a few words. It is this circumstance which makes it peculiarly impressive; for the truth itself is declared in one form or another in every part of Scripture." Whatever, then, may be fitted to give special interest to a text, either at all times, or in

the peculiar circumstances of the congregation, will furnish matter for an appropriate beginning.

7. Occasionally it is suitable to introduce a subject by referring to something strange or mysterious about it that excites curiosity and demands an explanation. If we may judge from the frequency with which it occurs in his volume of sermons, this would seem to be a favourite method with Dr. Ker. On the text, "He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow" (Eccl. i. 18), he begins :—"This is a very strange declaration to come from the man who had made wisdom his choice as the supreme thing in life, and who had been approved of by God for the decision." A sermon on the burial of Moses begins :—"There is something strange and altogether singular in this, that Moses, the greatest of all the Old Testament prophets, should find a resting-place on the earth, and no man be able to find it out." And on the young man whom Christ pronounced not far from the kingdom of God, he begins, "If these had not been the words of Jesus Christ, there would probably have been some Christians found strongly objecting to them." Whenever an interest is excited by this means in the strange or unexpected feature of the text, attention is sure to be given to the attempt that must follow to explain the matter, and remove the mystery.

8. Still another way of introducing sermons is the dramatic. To be effectively made use of, this method requires more dash and boldness than is common among our countrymen, or, except in a very subdued form, very suitable for young preachers. But it often comes with much effect from the great French preachers. Thus Bourdaloue, on the Passion, taking for his text the words, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me,"

etc., thus starts at once:—"Is it then true that the Passion of Jesus Christ, of which we celebrate to-day the august but sorrowful mystery, is not the most touching object that can occupy our minds and excite our grief? Is it true that our tears can be more holily and more suitably employed than in weeping over the God-man, and that another duty more pressing and more necessary, suspends, so to speak, the obligation which so just a gratitude imposes upon us in another place, to sympathize, by sentiments of tenderness, in the sufferings of our Divine Redeemer? Never could we have supposed it, Christians; and yet it is Jesus Christ who speaks to us, and who, as the last proof of his love, the most generous and the most disinterested that ever existed, in his way to Calvary, where he must die for us, warns us not to weep at his death, and to weep over every other thing, rather than his death."

Although it may not often suit our quiet manner to begin in a way so pronouncedly dramatical as this, something of the kind is often highly appropriate. Thus, Dr. Guthrie, who did so great a service to the Scottish pulpit by the life with which his sermons teem, begins his sermons on the thirty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel:—"Having scattered over an open field the bones of the human body, bring an anatomist to the scene. Conduct him to the valley where Ezekiel stood, with his eye on the skulls and dismembered skeletons of an unburied host. Observe the man of science, how he fits bone to bone, and part to part, till from those disjointed members he constructs a framework which, apart from our horror at the eyeless sockets and fleshless form, appears perfectly, divinely beautiful. In hands which have the patience to collect and the skill to arrange these materials, how perfectly they fit!—

bone to bone, and joint to joint, till the whole figure rises to the polished dome, and the dumb skeleton seems to say, 'I am fearfully and wonderfully made.'"

In many cases, the simplest form of dramatic writing, asking a question, makes a good beginning; as in Dr. Newman's sermon on—"The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power,"—"How are we the better for being members of the Christian Church? What reason have we for thinking that our lives are very different from what they would have been if we had been heathens? Have we, in the words of the text, received the Kingdom of God in word or in power?"

It is well to bear in view these different ways of beginning sermons, and the principles that underlie them. At the same time, it may be doubted whether it would be a wise thing for a preacher to get into the way of framing his introductions by rule. The ablest preachers have seldom done so, but have been guided by a kind of instinctive perception of the best and most suitable way of catching up the attention of their hearers, giving them a just view of the text, and preparing them for the discourse that was to follow. In any case, it is not desirable that a preacher should have only one way of beginning, for different occasions and different subjects will demand different introductions. It may often happen, too, that a different introduction will suit the same sermon preached to a different audience, or on a different occasion; the preacher may find something specially occupying the minds of the people that will enable him to make a more effective start. Experience too will help to guide young preachers. There is a hushed attention sometimes at the opening of a sermon, which not only shows that the preacher has struck a happy chord, but indicates that it would

be well for him not to allow it to slumber, but appeal to it as often as he wisely may.

II. The second thing in a discourse is to announce the proposition. This however is not always done formally, and does not always need to be. Sometimes it is self-evident—the text itself proclaims it. Texts like the following proclaim their own subject:—"It is appointed unto men once to die;" "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ;" "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." But in cases where the exact topic to be handled is not self-evident, or where the division will not bring it plainly out, there is an undoubted advantage in distinctly stating it. Thus, Dr. Chalmers's celebrated sermon "On the expulsive power of a new affection," begins by expressly announcing the thing to be shown. "There are two ways," he says, "in which a practical moralist may attempt to displace from the human heart its love of the world,—either by a demonstration of the world's vanity, so as that the heart shall be prevailed upon simply to withdraw its regards from an object that is not worthy of it; or by setting forth another object, even God, as more worthy of its attachment; so as that the heart shall be prevailed upon, not to resign an old affection which shall have nothing to succeed it, but to exchange an old affection for a new one. *My purpose is to show* that from the constitution of our nature the former method is altogether incompetent and ineffectual, and that the latter method will alone suffice for the rescue and recovery of the heart from the wrong affection that domineers over it." Some of the old preachers made a practice of formally announcing their subject. Jonathan Edwards commonly gives it as a Proposition—Ebenezer Erskine and others of the same

school, as a Doctrine. This formality would be rather embarrassing than otherwise; but in every case in which clearness demands that a statement be given of the object of the discourse, no common pains ought to be taken to do it well. Neatness, clearness, conciseness, must be earnestly sought after, because the statement ought to be capable of being readily remembered, and ought to remain before the minds of the audience during the whole progress of the discourse.

III. We proceed to the third thing—the proof—in connexion with which we have to notice the subject of divisions. The discourses of our Lord and his apostles had not formal or announced divisions, and the preachers of the early church, though they sometimes numbered their paragraphs, did not often enumerate their heads. It would be foolish therefore to represent heads as essential to a good sermon, or to condemn a preacher for not using them, provided the structure of his mind were such that he could more effectively draw his remarks, each out of its predecessor, like the folds of a telescope, and provided that he could in this way equally keep up the attention of his audience, and engage both their heads and their hearts. In platform speeches one seldom makes use of heads, because on the platform we are more conversational and less given to abstract treatises; and when in the pulpit the conversational method is followed, and the preacher strives to speak *to* the people—right home to the actual feelings of their hearts—he is less disposed to resort to formal divisions. It is the heaviest style of preaching that needs most to be broken up into heads; and there can be no doubt that in many cases the divisions that are so formally announced are little better than a disguise of the heaviness of the discourse. Yet in dis-

courses which have the instruction of the audience as one of their leading objects, divisions of some sort are very desirable, both as guiding-posts to the preacher and stepping-stones to the audience. Only it must be seen to that instead of signals for inattention they really tend to increase the interest of the audience in the subject.

The celebrated essay of the French divine, Claude, "On the composition of a sermon," is chiefly occupied with the division of discourses. The subject is treated with remarkable fulness, both theoretically and by illustrative cases. Many modes of viewing texts and topics are suggested, fitted to show the best method of dividing, and likewise of bringing out in proper order and with great fulness all the views and lessons which the subjects embrace. We must content ourselves in this place with a few general remarks, referring to Claude not only for a full discussion, but for numberless minute hints on particular texts and topics.

It is obvious that hardly any subject or text can be divided well, without being first subjected to a very careful examination. For though a possible and even charming mode of division may sometimes be flashed into one's mind, it is quite possible that on further consideration it may have to be abandoned, as either inappropriate or palpably incomplete.

On whatever principle the division of a subject may be made, three general rules are always applicable :—1. The heads ought to be few in number; 2. Logical in arrangement; 3. Briefly, concisely, and attractively stated.

1. A great multiplicity of heads and divisions is simply bewildering, and is accepted by the bulk of hearers as a proof that, as no effort to remember the

whole could be successful, no effort to remember them needs to be made. If it is really desired that the substance of the sermon be carried away by the hearers, the preacher must limit his points to the number which their average attention and memory may reasonably be expected to grasp. If the number of points that presents itself to him be much greater, it is absolutely essential that he make a selection of the most salient or important. It is said of a Puritan preacher that he once got the length of "seventy-sixthly." I have heard of a clever criticism of a Latin discourse delivered long ago in the Divinity Hall at Aberdeen, when, after a full hour, the discourser announced his last head, "undevigesimo et tandem ultimo," on which his critic remarked, that the only observation that occurred to him was, that he had never before heard the word *tandem* used with such singular propriety. "Division," says Claude, "ought in general to be limited to a small number of parts; they should never exceed four or five at the most; the most admired sermons have only two or three parts."

2. In arrangement, divisions ought to be logical. Care must be taken not to put a division first, which requires something to be explained belonging to a subsequent head. Care must also be taken, in any enumeration of points, to avoid repeating the same thing in different words, or making that a separate head, which is properly a particular under a former division. Suppose, for example, that the text is, "Be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh." Here it would be natural to show what is implied in being ready. Suppose it should be laid down that to be ready is,—1. To be at peace with God. 2. To be a sincere believer in Christ. 3. To be following peace with all men and holiness. 4. To be a par-

taker of the Holy Spirit. 5. To be using one's talents in the Master's service;—it is evident, that though all of these are right separately, the enumeration is doubly faulty. The first particular is not only included in the second, but depends on it, and so does the third on the fourth. Union to Christ and participation in the Holy Ghost might be referred to as the fundamental requisites, and under these such special fruits of either as bear specially on the readiness in question.

3. In the statement of the divisions, there ought to be a special effort to be clear, pithy, and concise. If possible, each ought to be expressed in a single word, or in a single prominent word. If we would condescend to take a lesson from children's sermons we should see this very clearly, for every successful preacher to children expresses his divisions with wonderful conciseness. He knows how vain it would be to make their memories carry more. It is the conviction that but little attention is usually paid to divisions that makes some preachers omit them altogether, trusting more to the general effect of a number of thoughts bearing in the same direction than to a definite statement and illustration of each several particular.

To come now to the practical question, How ought we to divide? The question really branches into two; for there is one rule applicable to the division of texts, and another to the division of subjects.

Texts often contain their own division. "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." The division obviously is, first,—the three graces that *abide* or are permanent (the force of μένει must not be overlooked); and, second,—the superiority of charity, and the grounds thereof. The corresponding passage in 1 Thess. i. 3, in which the apostle

dwells on the grounds of his satisfaction with the Thessalonian Church, equally suggests its own division—"Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." So also the three rules for the believer's daily life (Rom. xii.): "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

It is often useful to announce the division by neatly indicating the topics contained in the several parts of the text. Thus, in Eph. vi. 18 the apostle exhorts to prayer: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." Here we have a full view of the more important qualities of true prayer. (1.) *Incessant*—"praying always." (2.) *Manifold*—"with all prayer"—(all kinds of prayer—secret, ejaculatory, domestic, public). (3.) *Spiritual*—"in the Spirit." (4.) *Vigilant*—"watching thereunto." (5.) *Persevering*—"with all perseverance." (6.) *Intercessory*—"supplication for all saints." The following instance we take from Claude. It is founded on the text, Eph. i. 3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." There is—(1.) A grateful acknowledgment—"Blessed be God." (2.) The title under which the apostle blesses God—"The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." (3.) The reason for this—"He hath blessed us." (4.) The fulness of this blessing—"With all blessings." (5.) The nature of the blessings—"Spiritual." (6.) The place or sphere in which he hath blessed us—"In heavenly places." (7.) The person through whom—"In Christ Jesus." Discourses of this kind are among the most useful that one can preach, and they fulfil a celebrated canon of Chrysostom's in

regard to sermons,—"That God ought to speak much, and man little."

Texts that so obviously suggest their own division are not, however, the most numerous class, and in many instances it is more difficult to divide them. The preacher's great effort ought to be to find out the natural order of the topics, and, following that, to give to the subject all the unity of which it is capable. Great benefit will often be derived from carefully singling out the leading statement of the passage, and grouping the subordinate statements under it. Thus (2 Cor. iii. 18)—"We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." It will be found that the leading statement here is, that under the gospel we behold the glory of the Lord as in a glass *with open face*, and that the subordinate statements are,—1. By this process we are changed into the same image. 2. This change is gradual: "from glory to glory." 3. It is produced by the Spirit of the Lord.

It may sometimes happen that there are two natural orders,—the order of time, and the order of our experience. Thus the text, Heb. x. 10, "By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all," viewed according to the order of time, would be divided thus:—1. The will of God is the ultimate cause of our sanctification. 2. The offering up of Christ once for all is the immediate cause. 3. The change produced on us—we are sanctified. But in such a case it is better to take the order of our experience: 1. The offering. 2. The sanctification which it produces. 3. The will of God, in which our sanctification originates, and which gives it efficacy.

There is a large class of texts which are not to be

divided into their parts, but rather treated according to their aspects. They do not so much contain truths as they recognise and suggest them. Thus in the sermon already referred to on the text—"I would that not only thou, but also all that hear me, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds"—the preacher finds two of the Christian graces, but in different modes of action,—Faith in a state of *repose*, and Love in a state of *struggle*. Faith in a state of repose shows itself in its satisfaction with its condition; and, though the text hardly suggests the particulars, the preacher shows how faith is satisfied—(*a*) with its *foundation*, (*b*) with its *experiences*, and (*c*) with its *expectations*. Love, on the other hand, is here seen in a state of struggle—it pants for the establishment of Christian brotherhood, "such as I am;" for the *entire* blessedness of those that excite its interest, "both almost and altogether;" for the entire blessedness of *all* men, "not only thou, but also all that hear me;" and it pleads with God to make them so, "I would to God." There is a combination here of parts and aspects, or rather the parts are brought skilfully in under the aspects.

In some cases it is necessary to *explain* the text, especially when it is obscure and difficult; in other cases, all that is needed is to enforce and apply a familiar truth. Sometimes the preacher proceeds by building upon the text a series of observations suggested by it. For example, the text (Acts ix. 4), "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" has been treated thus after the observational manner—1. Unconverted men generally are in a persecuting spirit towards earnest Christians. 2. Christ has his eye upon persecutors. 3. The kindness or injury done to his people Christ considers done to himself. 4. The conviction of sin is the first step to

conversion. 5. The calls of Christ are earnest and particular, "Saul, Saul." 6. Christ condescends to reason with his enemies: "Why persecutest thou me?"

Textual sermons may also be constructed by specifying the particular modes in which some general principle or statement finds its verification. Thus let the text be (Numb. xxxii. 23), "Be sure your sin will find you out,"—a useful discourse may be based on the different ways in which sin finds out the sinner—*e.g.*, 1. By remorse of conscience; 2. By the power of natural law; 3. By the special working of divine providence; 4. By the awful revelations of the day of judgment. A very favourite and interesting species of textual discourses of this class are those which are founded on some figure or emblem of Scripture. The resemblances between the symbol and the thing symbolized always open an interesting field. For example (Rev. xxii. 16), "I am . . . the morning star:"—1. Christ's influence is as light after darkness; 2. Possesses for ever the freshness of the morning; 3. Is the pledge of a glorious future; 4. Even of the perfect day.

So much for the division of texts; we should next consider the division of subjects. But we confess that we shrink from a question on which so much has been written to so little purpose. It may be useful to study the twenty-eight topics of Aristotle, the twenty-seven of Claude, and the sixteen of Gresley; but we do not think that even after doing so the student will find himself in possession of very serviceable rules. He will undoubtedly find useful views suggested to him, out of which occasionally good divisions will come. But as a rule it will be better for him to consult his own common sense, and in connexion with each topic to consider what mode of presenting it is most likely to lodge the

great truths which belong to it in the mind and heart of his hearers.

There is a danger of divisions becoming a hindrance instead of a help to the great end of preaching. When constructed too artificially and stated too formally, they break up the continuity of thought, and diminish instead of helping the final impression. Number two may lead the preacher into a line quite different from number one, and number three different from either. The true idea of a division is, that it shall serve to promote the unity and continuity of thought, and that the parts shall be so arranged that each shall increase and intensify the impression produced by the part preceding. If continuous thought and accumulated impression can be secured better without formal divisions, by all means let them be discarded. The most efficient discourses are those where the line of remark is clear and simple, and the preacher as he goes along gets nearer to his audience, and forces them to give heed to the great subjects of his preaching.

IV. The last part of a discourse is appropriately termed—the conclusion. Of the importance of this part it is hardly possible to speak too strongly. It ought to be the most vital of the whole, and if the preacher has been gradually warming, and accumulating force as the discourse has advanced, at the conclusion his spirit should be on fire, and the impression of his closing passages should be by far the strongest of any. Yet in practice the conclusion is often the weakest part. The preacher perhaps, in preparing his discourse, gave up the labour of arranging his thoughts before coming to the close, so that instead of being more concentrated at the end, his discourse lost itself in a marsh, or ended like the emptying of a pitcher, with a few

poor drops and dregs. Cicero's rule was, "Quæ excellant, serventur ad perorandum." A conclusion certainly cannot be worthy if it only says weakly what has been said previously perhaps in better words and with greater force.

In general, the conclusion of a discourse will probably assume the form either of inferences, or of a direct appeal. The nature of the subject will determine which of these is preferable. If the subject has been chiefly of an expository nature, inferences will probably be needed to bring out its significance and importance, and its relation to the practical interests of the hearers. If no inferences are needed to show the practical bearing of the subject, the preacher's concluding remarks will naturally take the form of an appeal. But in any case the inferences ought to embody the spirit of an appeal, and the appeal ought to carry all the weight of inferences. The last effort of the preacher ought to be a signal one—like Samson's last achievement against the Philistines. It ought to be the concentration, as with a burning glass, of all the rays that have been collected during the progress of the address. If during the sermon he has been bringing up his guns, at the close he should make their fire converge with resistless momentum. The rule "ut augeatur semper, et increscat oratio" reaches the climax of its application now. Considerations derived from the discourse fitted to move the will, conscience, and feelings of the hearer should be pressed with an earnestness that will take no denial. "Hic si unquam," says Quinctilian, "totos eloquentiæ fontes aperire fas est." If the understanding has been gained in the earlier parts, the heart and the will must be gained in the later.

But let the preacher beware of trifling with this

opportunity. Let him beware of the temptation to play off some highly rhetorical passage at the close of his discourse. The arts of a mere tinsel rhetoric are at all times sufficiently hateful in the pulpit, but most of all when the preacher is about to part with his audience, and utter the words that are to ring in their ears when his voice is silent. Let him also above all things avoid an artificial earnestness. Let his last appeal, above all parts of his sermon, be from the heart to the heart. There is no time when an earnest preacher can so readily forget himself and everything else, save the eternal interests which he represents. The last five minutes of the discourse, in point of real effect, ought to be worth all the thirty or thirty-five that have gone before them. It is fatal folly for the preacher to exhaust himself and his audience before they are reached.

Various other questions may be asked with reference to conclusions. Ought we always to conclude with an offer of the Gospel? Ought we to address more classes of hearers than one? And especially, ought our sermons to contain appeals both to the converted and the unconverted?

To lay down rules on such subjects seems quite out of place. To follow an invariable practice is hardly better. Let a preacher, for example, get into the invariable habit of addressing converted and unconverted persons separately at the end of every discourse, it is hardly in the nature of things that he should avoid formality and consequent feebleness. There is no good reason for shutting up a preacher to any invariable way of concluding. Better far that on each occasion he should carry his subject to its natural close, and point it to the application best fitted by the blessing of the Spirit to gain his great end. It is great wisdom to

know when to end. To spin out a discourse after the preacher has exhausted both his audience and himself, and leave them with no wish but that he would be done, is terrible,—really terrible. It is a sin to expose a divine ordinance to the scornful treatment which such a proceeding provokes. If any summing up of the previous remarks is necessary, it ought to be brief. Preachers, no doubt, do well to aid their hearers in carrying away as much of their discourses as they can. But they will do better to remember that discourses are for a higher purpose than even to be remembered. It is said of a poor woman, who worked in a wool-mill, and used to walk a long way to attend the services of a godly minister, but could not remember his sermons, that when her neighbours used to taunt her, she replied, with that happy art which can make ready use of common things for spiritual purposes,—"Do you see the wool that I am washing? It keeps none of the water, but it is always growing whiter. It is true I remember little of what I hear, but I would fain hope that I too am growing whiter."

CHAPTER XI.

EXPOSITORY LECTURES.

THE object of an expository lecture is to bring out the meaning and apply the teaching of longer passages of Scripture than are commonly used as the texts of sermons. The "lecture," as it is technically called in Scotland, is more didactic than the sermon. The element of teaching occupies a larger place than that of persuasion. Not that persuasion may be omitted, for the highest skill of the preacher, in the construction of a lecture, will be shown in making the whole converge in the way of persuasion. Only, by the nature of the case, he will have to bestow more time and pains on the exposition of the passage; whereas in the sermon, he will aim more directly and constantly at moving, guiding, and elevating the soul of his hearers.

In lecturing, you necessarily throw yourself more thoroughly into the current of the thoughts of the sacred writer. You place yourself as much as possible in his position, and you try to bring out precisely the whole circumstances of the case, as they presented themselves to him. Hence arises one of the difficulties of the lecture. To expound the past is one thing, to move the present by means of it is another. The perfection of lecturing is, so to combine the past and the present, to make the one such a mirror of the other, that what is said of the one shall have a powerful

influence in moving the other. Let us suppose, for example, that you are lecturing on the parable of the unfaithful steward. Naturally, you bend your energies in the first instance towards expounding the parable—removing the difficulties, and vindicating the teaching of our Lord. But to what effect will all this be, if you do not come into contact with analogous things in the hearts and lives of your audience? It will be little better than a piece of dry antiquarianism. And no doubt it is a fatal fault of many lectures, as of many sermons, that they keep at a great distance from present-day experiences, and aim only at throwing light on the remote past. To find out the representative principle that underlies the sacred Scriptures,—to find in the past a type of the present, and so to expound what was said or done in that little patch of Syrian soil, the land of Canaan, that the hearer of the nineteenth century may feel unmistakably—"Thou art the man,"—is the very perfection of an expository lecture. Scripture thus expounded is in little danger of being caricatured as "Hebrew old clothes." It then becomes plain that what things were written of old were written for our edification, and that the Bible, being God's revelation, is a book for all ages and for all men.

Since the lecture aims so much in the first instance at expounding the passage on which it is founded, the *introduction* may very fitly be of a more exegetical character than is commonly best for the sermon. Not that this is invariably the best form of introduction. The drift of the passage may be too obvious to require to be indicated, and many things may make it desirable to begin the lecture on the same principle as the sermon, with something that will arouse interest or draw attention. In lectures as in sermons, a monotonous or

commonplace commencement,—too often a mere signal to hearers to let their attention wander,—is by every means to be avoided.

The advantages of expository preaching, especially when the lectures form a continued series, are numerous and important. The preacher finds his text ready to his hand. He is constrained to comprehend a greater breadth of Scriptural truth than he would take in if each text were chosen by itself. He is carried beyond the range of topics which he might naturally choose,—borne out, as it were, more into the open sea. Details of duty and of sin which otherwise might seem beyond the scope of the pulpit, may not only be brought within it, but the preacher may gain additional authority in handling these from the fact that it is a text coming in course that gives him the occasion. Thus in a course of lectures on the ten commandments, one may say things regarding the seventh, which could not be said if the subject were approached without the protection which is afforded by its coming in course. To the people the practice of expository lecturing is very instructive; they see more of the fulness and comprehensiveness of Scripture, and are trained to a more careful habit of reading it, and to an habitual endeavour to observe its scope and connexion.

On the other hand, there are difficulties connected with the lecture, and especially the course of lectures, which it is not every preacher, not even every able preacher, that can overcome. Subjects may turn up, as was formerly remarked, into which the preacher cannot enter with much spirit, because no allied stream of thought has started up in his own mind. At the same time, there can be little doubt that if the preacher's attention be directed pretty early to the passage in

question, and some pains be taken to find out its bearings, and if the fountain of all light be earnestly resorted to, the subject, whatever it may be, will become more interesting, and a suitable line of remark will open to him. A still greater trial to the preacher's powers, however, will be found in the difficulty of grasping the whole passage, ascertaining its great central truth, grouping the subordinate lessons and details, passing from one to another without abruptness, and fusing the whole into a homogeneous mass. For a lecture, in the real sense of the term, is neither a paraphrase nor a commentary. It is not an easier mode of preaching, adopted by the preacher to save trouble. It is not a series of little sermons on half-a-dozen consecutive texts in place of one. The preacher must not suppose that he is to take up clause after clause, making a few unconnected remarks on each, passing rapidly from those which are unsuggestive, and dwelling at greater length on those on which it is easiest to hang a few commonplace remarks. The true lecture, as has been remarked, like the true sermon, should have a true unity—should have a beginning, a middle, and an end. It ought to have an organized structure, and all its parts ought to bear upon a definite object. Our Lord's parables, in the distinctness with which they present some great central truth, and the skill with which various related truths are attached to it, present the *beau-idéal* of the structure of an expository lecture. A remark formerly made as to what sermons should contain, is also applicable to lectures. It is not necessary to insert every remark that could be made upon the passage, but only such as have a bearing on the great end of the whole. A lecture is not a philosophical treatise, but an address designed to impress some truth

or duty on the hearers. The topics of which it ought to consist are those most fitted, under God's Spirit, to accomplish this end.

"Even when a suitable passage has been selected," remarks Dr. Shedd, "the sermonizer will need to employ his strongest logical talent, and his best rhetorical ability, to impart sufficient of the rhetorical form and spirit to the expository sermon. He will need to watch his mind and his plan with great care, lest the discourse overflow its banks, and spread out in all directions, losing the current, and the deep, strong volume of eloquence. This species of sermonizing is very liable to be a diluting of divine truth instead of an exposition. Perhaps, among modern preachers, Chalmers exhibits the best example of the expository sermon. The oratorical structure and spirit of his mind enabled him to create a current, in almost every species of discourse which he undertook, and through his lectures on the Romans, we find a strong unifying stream of eloquence constantly setting in, with an increasing and surging force, from the beginning to the end. The expository preaching of this distinguished sacred orator is well worth studying in the respect of which we are treating."[1]

In the well-known work on Preaching by the Rev. Daniel Moore, special commendation is bestowed on some of the Puritan writers as excelling in expository discourse. "For power," says he, "to seize on the salient moral of a passage, or pick up the interlacing threads of several verses, and combine them into one strand of thought, the preachers of the period referred to are surpassed by few. Writers like Manton on St. James, or Adams on St. Peter, or Greenhill on Ezekiel, or Caryl on Job, will rarely be consulted by the expository

[1] Shedd's *Homiletics and Pastoral Theology*, p. 155.

preacher without profit. As greatly helpful to his purpose also, especially in affording examples of devout application, as well as dexterous and able grouping, he will not overlook the commentaries of Matthew Henry and the pious Burkitt."[1] To the older works here mentioned, let us add Archbishop Leighton's Exposition of First Peter. Fair in exegesis, excellent in arranging and grouping, rich and suggestive in commenting and applying, Leighton is moreover marked by a serenity of mind and a heavenliness of tone that seem to carry us to the gate of heaven. For calming, purifying, and elevating, there is hardly a writer to be compared to him.

Some of the exegetical writers of Germany have contributed valuable materials for the expository lecture. Of Bengel's *Gnomon* it is not needful that we should speak. Hengstenberg, Tholuck, Stier, Olshausen, Besser, Krummacher, and others, have done much towards enabling us to bring out of our treasuries things new and old. The commentaries edited by Lange are especially helpful; the "homiletical hints," if used simply as hints, being very valuable for enriching our expositions.

Let us now notice briefly a few of the different modes of treatment.

1. Sometimes the passage suggests, or even states its own divisions, and this is a great advantage both for perspicuity and unity. Suppose, for example, that the lecture is on the first Psalm. Not only the great salient truth of the psalm, the contrast between the godly and the ungodly, but the illustrative particulars under each great head, are expressly stated, and with something of the force and interest of a climax. It is of no small benefit to the lecturer to be able to devise a simple logical division, running parallel to the succes-

[1] *Thoughts on Preaching*, pp. 307, 308.

sive verses or paragraphs of his text. Thus the psalm describes :—I. The blessedness of the godly man. II. The misery of the wicked. I. The godly man is delineated—1. In his character; 2. In his condition. As to his *character*, there is first a series of negative particulars, showing what he is not; then illustrations of what he is :—(1) He walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly; (2) he standeth not in the way of sinners; (3) he sitteth not in the seat of the scornful. But, positively, (1) his delight is in the law of the Lord, and (2) he meditates therein day and night. His character being thus described, his *condition* corresponds. And here the poetry of the psalm comes out; a figurative resemblance is chosen, giving animation and beauty to the description—"He is like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that (1) bringeth forth fruit in season, (2) his leaf doth not wither; and (3)—the figure being now dropt—whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The case of the wicked man is then dwelt on. The *character* is not enlarged on—being the converse of the other. His *condition*, like that of the other, is described by a figure —he is like the chaff which the wind drives away. And this instability will come to its climax, and its ruinous consequences will be seen on the day of judgment. This gives the preacher the opportunity of enlarging the contrast, and deepening its colour. The certainty of these conclusions is confirmed in both cases by the Lord's omniscience—"For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish."

It is plain that such a variety of topics admit of being handled in a single lecture only in the way of a running commentary, and that a different mode of treatment must be adopted, if the preacher is to go deeper into

the substance of the psalm. Such a treatment is the following:—Two classes of men are here described by their appropriate law or rule of life. The one follow the law of the Lord, and the other follow the counsel of the ungodly. The fruits or results of these several rules of life are described: the stability and growing prosperity of the one; the instability and final destruction of the other.

2. In many cases, however, the passage does not suggest its own division, and pains must be taken to discover the natural order of the topics. The order to be followed is such as will enable the lecturer to enlarge on the several points, without having to anticipate some and go back on others;—bringing all forward in a natural, simple, and easy succession. Suppose that the subject of lecture were the first eight verses of 2 Cor. v.: the passage where the apostle contrasts the earthly house of the tabernacle with the house not made with hands. It is plain that, following the order of the passage, we should have to repeat the same topics: *e.g.*, v. 2, "we groan;" v. 4, "we groan, being burdened; v. 2, "we earnestly desire to be clothed upon;" v. 4, "we would not be unclothed, but clothed upon." We must therefore endeavour to find a simple but comprehensive order of topics; laying hold, first, of the leading truth, and grouping the subordinate truths under it. The leading truth is, that in its future state the soul of the believer will be lodged in *a better dwelling* than it is lodged in here. The disadvantages of the present dwelling is the first subordinate truth—the believer's groaning and burden; but his longing is not for a wholly disembodied state, his soul still craves some kind of clothing. This leads to the next topic—the advantages of the future dwelling—(1) it is a building

of God, (2) a house not made with hands, (3) eternal in the heavens, (4) it is of such a structure that mortality shall be swallowed up of life. The next subordinate truth is, the corresponding fellowship pertaining to each condition, expressed more pithily in the original—*ἐνδημοῦντες ἐν τῷ σώματι, ἐκδημοῦμεν ἀπὸ τοῦ Κυριου· ἐκδημῆσαι ἐκ τοῦ σώματος—ἐνδημῆσαι πρὸς τὸν Κύριον.* The last truth is, the grounds of our confidence—(1) God hath given us the earnest of the Spirit; (2) we walk by faith and not by sight; hence the joyful state of mind even of the suffering Christian, and the earnest desire with which he looks forward to the change when the body is dissolved by death.

3. Again, there are lectures, founded on passages of acknowledged difficulty, where a considerable share of labour must be devoted to the elucidation of the meaning of the sacred writer. Of such passages the following are samples :—Romans ix. 3-5, "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh," etc.; Hebrews vi. 4-6, "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift . . . if they fall away, to renew them again unto repentance." In dealing with such passages as these, the first and chief object of the preacher must be to ascertain the writer's meaning. For this purpose, the context must be examined with unusual care, in order that the exact current of thought may be ascertained. A somewhat elaborate comparison may be needed with other passages, either parallel or apparently opposed, and the exact meaning of particular expressions may have to be investigated. This process of exegetical inquiry being completed, all that remains will be to press home the lessons of the passage. Much care must be taken, in

handling such a text, to adapt one's-self to one's audience—avoiding the extremes of excessive depth, and excessive superficiality. In fact, one of the best possible tests of practical ability is to discourse suitably and impressively on such difficult topics as these.

In lecturing on our Lord's parables there is not often occasion for grappling with difficulties or obscurities, but there is much need for ascertaining the precise point in hand, the single analogy with which our Lord deals. The remark has often been made that to represent the parables as containing analogies at every point would be to turn them to purposes the very opposite of what our Lord designed, inasmuch as it seems to have been his intention to make the one point of real analogy conspicuous by surrounding it with circumstances where there is opposition rather than agreement.

Historical passages have sometimes difficulties, but more commonly not. In general, a brief statement of the facts is desirable, avoiding tediousness. This statement should convey the preacher's idea of the light in which the facts are to be viewed, and prepare the way for the lessons derived from them. A delicate task is presented to the lecturer on historical passages; the sacred writer seldom states explicitly what is to be praised and what is to be blamed, either in the acts or the sayings of the person in question; the sifting of the character and life falls to the preacher. The successful treatment of history and biography in the way of lecture is extremely difficult to minds of the rigidly logical and dogmatic cast; where there is more of the discursive and imaginative quality, success is usually greater.

4. A *fourth* mode is that in which the lecturer proceeds by a series of observations. This however is

less desirable than any of the other methods, because it affords less security for exhausting the whole teaching of the passage.

As a general rule, the practical and hortatory part will come most fully at the end; but it is not at all desirable to make a complete separation between the explanatory and the hortatory as you go along; there should be a practical vein all through. Whatever there is of an inferential kind at the close should rather be the summing up of what has been substantially brought out as you have gone along, than new matter reserved to the end.

It may be useful here to offer a few observations regarding the portions of Scripture which may best be employed for a course of expository lectures. It is remarkable how intensely interested many of the better class of hearers become in such a course, when it is really thorough and satisfying,—how great exertions they will often make not to miss any member of the series. When this is the case, the minds of preacher and hearers are bound together by links of singular strength. It is to be remarked, however, that a taste for expository preaching on the part of a congregation presupposes a more than ordinary measure of esteem for the Word of God, acquaintance with it, and interest in it. It is the more ignorant, easy-minded, and careless class to whom lecturing is distasteful. Robert Hall found that lecturing was relished by his well-trained congregation in Cambridge, but when he removed to Leicester he found the people less capable of appreciating it, and had to give up the practice. Where there is a profound sense of the authority of Scripture, a deep desire to be under its guidance, an earnest wish to know and follow all that the Lord has

spoken, good expository lecturing cannot fail to be highly valued.

It is very common in Scotland for preachers to give expository lectures covering the whole of some book or books of the Bible. Preachers have been known to begin at Genesis and go right on, sometimes however selecting only portions, till they came to the end of Revelation. But for the most part the principle of selecting certain books, as being better adapted than others for expository lecturing, has been followed. From its very varied historical, biographical, and general interest, the book of Genesis has been generally a favourite one, and many a young minister has begun his ministry by lecturing through it. The only other books of the Old Testament that *as complete books* seem to be often attempted are the poetical books,—the Psalms, the Song of Solomon, and perhaps we may add, the difficult book of Ecclesiastes. In regard to the New Testament, however, the case is almost precisely the reverse. There is hardly a book that is not often subjected to this process (with the exception perhaps of the pastoral Epistles). The Gospels, the Acts, the Epistles of Paul, the Hebrews, the general Epistles, and even the Apocalypse itself, though probably least frequently of all, are quite commonly made the subjects of exhaustive exposition. The preacher must determine for himself which of these he will adopt. According as he feels most at home in narrative, or in doctrine, or in experimental subjects, will probably and properly be his first choice. Thereafter he will be more guided perhaps by a regard to what he deems the spiritual necessities of his flock. He will endeavour, as a wise steward, to give to every one a portion of meat in due season. He will guard against monotony, and if once

he has carried his people elaborately through one of the profounder books he will probably deem it wise to let the next book be somewhat more easy. Whatever other subjects a minister may select, it is hardly possible that, in these times, he should not feel it a duty, in some shape or other, to take up the life of our blessed Lord. Either in lectures on a single Gospel, or on a harmony of the Gospels, or on selected portions, he will try to bring that subject prominently before his people.

A less serious undertaking than lecturing over a whole book is to lecture on selected chapters. For indeed there are chapters, or groups of chapters, that have a character of their own, as much so as if they formed separate books. The Sermon on the Mount, the farewell discourse of our Lord, the 53d chapter of Isaiah, certain of the Psalms, such as the 22d or the 51st—the 8th or the 12th chapter of Romans, the 13th or the 15th of 1 Corinthians, the 2d of Ephesians, the 11th of Hebrews, the second and third chapters of Revelation, and many other chapters that might be named, are admirably adapted for this purpose. The people get the benefit of the principle of continuity, without having to contemplate a length of period to which the ordinary avocations and changes of life are hardly adapted. One thing the preacher must make up his mind to,—when once he begins, to go on to the close. He must guard against a habit of fitfulness and irregularity, for people are quick to spy out a minister's infirmities, and it will be no advantage to his influence if his people are tempted to compare him to the man that began to build a tower, and was not able to finish it.

The biographies of Scripture furnish a very favourable field for expository lectures to those whose hand has the proper touch for such subjects. It needs

something of the artist's power to grasp the striking features, portray them clearly and strongly, connect them with moral and spiritual truths, and point them easily and strongly to the great practical lessons of life. But the interest, the variety, and the charm of Scripture biography are so great, that no common effort should be made to cultivate this field.

Besides lecturing over particular books, or portions of books, it is a common practice to give courses on connected subjects. Our Lord's parables and miracles obviously form a most convenient and useful basis for this practice. The attributes of God have been made the subject of a celebrated series by Atterbury, as the Apostle's Creed has also by Barrow. The Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, the Lord's Prayer, the relative and social duties, the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit, the whole armour of God, the several stories of the edifice which, in 2 Peter i., we are exhorted to build on faith, are also suitable. Sometimes lectures on connected subjects show hardly any difference from lectures on particular books. Thus, "Christ in the Old Testament" is the title of a long series of discourses by the late Dr. Gordon, his principle of selection being that of Christology—whatever passages seemed designed to bring up the Messiah. The late Dr. John Brown gave lectures on the sayings of our Lord. On the other hand, Dr. Goulburn's well-known treatise on *Personal Religion* is in reality a series of lectures bearing on one subject, but the texts are selected from various places.

Another mode of exposition, "the running commentary," is sometimes made use of when a chapter is read for general instruction. Twice over, in his ministry at Chester, Matthew Henry in this way read and commented on the whole Scriptures. It is apparently a

very simple thing, and yet to be well done it requires no little tact, neatness, and force. The object is to aid the hearer in perceiving the drift of the passage, and to link it on here and there to his heart and conscience, to aid him in making the application of it to his own circumstances and character. It is a mode of treatment that cannot so well be applied to the denser portions of Scripture ; it is more appropriate to the narrative parts. It wonderfully freshens the reading of a chapter when a few appropriate remarks are made here and there, either clearing the meaning or pointing the application. But it ought not to supersede the devout, uninterrupted, authoritative reading of the Holy Scriptures, as the Word of the living God, not depending on man's commentary or man's application, but itself appealing both to the understanding and the heart. In our zeal to edify we must take care lest we reverse the rule of Chrysostom, that God should speak much and man little.

There is still another species of expository discourse very rarely to be met with, but fitted to be most useful. It is common to preach on a single verse, or on a half-dozen or a dozen of consecutive verses, or even on a whole psalm or chapter. But why should not discourses sometimes be delivered on a whole book? Why should not a minister do in the pulpit what the late Dean Alford, Dr. Fraser, and others, have very usefully done through the press—explain to his people the drift and purpose of a whole book, or group of books, and give them such information about them as may serve to facilitate their understanding of the whole? Would it not be useful sometimes to hear a lecture on the Romans, as a whole, or the Hebrews, or the Apocalypse? It may be objected that it is difficult to combine with

this what is especially characteristic of an oratorical discourse. A lecture of this sort, it is thought, must be almost wholly an address to the understanding. The hearers can have but little to rouse their consciences, to warm their feelings, to quicken their efforts after holiness, or to give them an impulse heavenward. But why should it be so? Why but through some neglect or carelessness of the preacher? For surely there must be a great defect in the preacher if he set forth the scope and bearing of any book of Scripture without finding material for spiritual counsels or appeals. If, instead of gathering up the materials for impression, as they are found in small sections of the sacred books, one could extract the great lesson of the whole writing, and bring it to bear on men's hearts and consciences, instead of the impression being feebler, might we not reasonably expect that it should be greatly stronger?

With reference to expository discourses of all kinds, it is no doubt true that they afford less scope for oratory, and tie down the preacher more to a prescribed line of thought, than the ordinary sermon. But the time has not gone past when Christian preachers may be found who esteem it no drawback to have their message blocked out for them by the inspired writers, and who are willing to sacrifice something of the oratorical for the sake of the useful. The faithful exposition of Scripture was certainly the great business of the ministry in the early ages of the Christian Church, and those who strive to bring us back to primitive church usages could restore nothing more profitable. But the combination of the expository lecture and the ordinary sermon is the very best provision that can be made for the edification of congregations. The flock is led out to

the green pastures and still waters of the Word; while at the same time the preacher has constant opportunities of placing the great points of faith and practice in every variety of light, and pressing them on the attention of his people with every consideration that the character of the age or the circumstances of the flock may make it desirable to press into the service.

CHAPTER XII.

MODES OF DELIVERY.

THE merits and the demerits of the three different methods of delivering discourses from the pulpit, namely reading, reciting from memory, and extemporizing, have often been discussed during the last two centuries. In a closely printed appendix of twenty-five pages subjoined to Dr. Kidder's treatise on *Homiletics* (p. 351, English edition), we have a summary of opinions on the subject, *pro* and *con.*, beginning with Bishop Burnet, and coming down to the more eminent preachers of the present time.

In the first age of the Church, sermons do not appear to have been written, far less read. The preachers of the first three centuries, though doubtless they may have availed themselves of the aids which help to give force and finish to extemporaneous addresses, do not appear to have committed their sermons to writing beforehand. About the time of Origen, we hear of shorthand writers (ὀξυγράφοι), men licensed by authority who were employed in taking down public addresses, and who were expected to submit their manuscripts to the preacher before publication. Some of the discourses of the early preachers contain passages that seem to have been introduced on the spur of the

moment, and that indicate the possession of a faculty of no small value—the power of turning to account slight passing events, and building on them suitable exhortations. One of Chrysostom's sermons on Genesis contains an extemporized passage suggested by the circumstance that, while the lamps in the building were being lit, the eyes of the people were following the lamplighter in place of the preacher—"Let me beg you to arouse yourselves, and to put away that sluggishness of mind. But why do I say this? At the very time when I am setting forth before you the Scriptures, you are turning your eyes away from me, and fixing them on the lamps, and upon the man who is lighting the lamps. Oh, of what a sluggish soul is this the mark, to leave the preacher and turn to him! I too am kindling the fire of the Scriptures, and upon my tongue there is burning a taper, the taper of sound doctrine. Greater is this light and better than the light that is yonder. For unlike that man, it is no wick steeped in oil that I am lighting up. I am rather inflaming souls, moistened with piety, by the desire of heavenly discourse."

Some critics will probably doubt whether this often quoted passage from Chrysostom was purely *ex tempore*, or was not the result of premeditation. But there can be no doubt that this celebrated preacher did not usually write his sermons, since it was his habit, at certain times, to preach every day. In regard to Augustine, too, there can be little doubt that he dealt largely in the extemporaneous method, for he sometimes told his audience that when he entered the pulpit he meant to pass over certain topics on which, nevertheless, he felt it his duty to enlarge. Yet we cannot suppose that all those wonderfully concise instances of antithesis and alliteration which stud the Homilies of Augustine, were

entirely unpremeditated. Nor can there be much doubt that during that brilliant period when so many men that had studied rhetoric in the schools became Christian preachers, they were not content to trust themselves to extemporaneous speech. We are told of Cyril of Alexandria, that some of his homilies were committed to memory by Greek bishops as models of Christian declamation. Augustine excuses those whose preaching ability was but slender for committing other men's discourses to memory, and reciting them to their flocks; though for his part, he knew a more excellent way, and strongly urges the preacher "to read in the eyes and countenances of his hearers whether or not they understand him, and to repeat the same thing in different terms till he perceives that it is understood; an advantage which those cannot have who by a servile dependence on their memories learn their sermons by heart, and repeat them like so many lessons."

The practice of reading sermons from a manuscript does not seem to have been practised till after the Reformation, nor to have ever prevailed extensively in any other language than the English. Bishop Burnet traces the practice to the fewness of qualified preachers in England after the Reformation, and the necessity of getting the people instructed in religious truth by the best means that were available. The book of Homilies was accordingly prepared, and these were appointed to be read to congregations one by one by some qualified reader. The practice of reading sermons from manuscript would very naturally in process of time grow out of this arrangement. But it was not a practice that met with approval either from the people or from the authorities. In 1674, during the reign of Charles II., a royal decree was published against the custom, ad-

dressed to the Vice-Chancellor of the university of Cambridge :—"Whereas his majesty is informed that the practice of *reading* sermons is generally taken up by the preachers before the University, and is continued even before himself, his majesty hath commanded me to signify to you his pleasure that the said practice, which took beginning with the disorders of the late times, be wholly laid aside; and that the aforesaid preachers deliver their sermons, both in Latin and English, by memory, or without book, as being a way of preaching which his majesty judgeth most agreeable to the use of all foreign churches, to the custom of the university heretofore, and to the nature and intendment of that holy exercise. And that his majesty's commands in the premises may be duly regarded and observed, his further pleasure is, that the names of all such ecclesiastical persons as shall continue the present supine and slothful way of preaching be from time to time signified to me by the vice-chancellor, for the time being, upon pain of his majesty's displeasure.—MONMOUTH."

In spite of the royal decree the practice of reading continued to hold its ground in England. In the eighteenth century the prevalent coldness and formality of the time encouraged it, until the older method, sanctioned though it was by the example of all Christian antiquity, came to be counted a token of fanaticism. So rigorous did the rule become, that what is now called slavish reading was the only style of delivery counted proper in a gentlemanly preacher; and it is said of a clergyman of this class that on one occasion he seriously compromised his character because he ventured to raise his eyes from his manuscript during the reading of his sermon. The practice of reading the published sermons

of the most eminent preachers, which in the *Spectator* obtained the commendation of Sir Roger de Coverley, was a natural consequence of this state of things. Then followed the practice of clergymen borrowing sermons from one another, and the still more handy custom of lithographed sermons sold at so much the dozen. Under such practices it need not be said that the pulpit suffered fearfully. Congregations that groaned under its dulness and lifelessness might be excused for making the most of the ludicrous incidents that sometimes occurred, as when a preacher once surprised a quiet country congregation by mysterious allusions to the late terrible catastrophe, and it turned out that the sermon which he had read had been prepared several years before on the occasion of the earthquake at Lisbon. The worst of these practices was, that the chief purpose for which the Head of the Church had organized a living ministry was entirely lost; instead of the truth falling with a deeper impression by coming warm from the hearts of men who felt it, and by being skilfully adapted to the circumstances and state of mind of the people who heard it, it fell like lumps of lead, serving no good end but that of exercising their patience. It would be very unfair, however, to represent the style of reading introduced by such preachers as corresponding to that which was practised by preachers like Jonathan Edwards or Thomas Chalmers; or to fail to give due weight to the conditions under which, but not without which, read sermons have not unfrequently been the means of much edification.

Let us endeavour, therefore, deliberately and fairly, to consider the relative merits of the different modes of delivery, with a view to prepare the way for some practical counsels.

1. As to *reading* sermons. The advantages of this method are, that it secures more care in the planning and working out of the discourse; more exactness of thought and precision of language; while it also protects the preacher from the effects of a nervous or timid temperament; from the danger of losing the thread of his discourse, and of giving it out either confusedly or hurriedly, or with important omissions, or with alterations that are fatal to the sense. Where the effect of the discourse, or of any part of it, is *cumulative*—where it depends upon the skilful building up of clause upon clause, or paragraph upon paragraph, reading, it is alleged, is quite essential to efficiency, unless at the expense of an amount of drudgery, in the way of committing to memory, which absorbs time, consumes nervous energy, and creates a constant anxiety, fatal to activity and efficiency in the other departments of the ministry.

On the other hand, it is objected to the practice of reading, that a certain monotony and unnaturalness of tone are almost inseparable from it; that the preacher cannot, in reading, hold that real and close communication with the minds and souls of his audience which is necessary to their being thoroughly impressed; that the effort to *seem* to be doing one thing, viz. speaking to them, while in reality he is doing another thing, viz. reading, must be awkward and enfeebling; that it is extremely difficult for him to have his own heart exercised in unison with what he is reading; that where vivid emotion has to be expressed, or earnest appeals have to be made, the process must be sadly artificial; and that read sermons, however well they may be fitted to *instruct*, cannot be effective in *persuading* hearers.

2. The second method of preaching—that of *reciting*

—has accordingly been devised with the view of securing the advantages, and at the same time remedying the evils, of reading. To a certain extent this is accomplished. Consecutiveness of thought, exactness and even beauty of language, are secured by this method, where it is properly carried into practice. But it is not so well fitted to secure ease, freedom, naturalness in delivery. The difference, as has been remarked, is, that the preacher reads from his memory in place of reading from his manuscript. The tendency on his part is to recite something before the people, rather than speak it to them. There is a somewhat similar awkwardness as when reading is practised, in seeming to be doing one thing—speaking, when in reality he is doing another thing—reciting. Nor is it much easier for a man reciting to enter into the feelings proper to what he is uttering. What he says is not very likely to come out with the freshness and naturalness of a working brain and a beating heart. If, in natural speaking, the tones of the voice are moulded by the molecular movements of the brain and nerves roused by the living soul, it follows that when the brain and nerves are not so roused, the tones of the voice will not be moulded naturally, but artificially. In such a case, the organs of speech do not spontaneously express the emotion; if they succeed in expressing it at all, it can only be in the way of imitation. In recited sermons, the tendency is rather to imitate the tones of emotion, than spontaneously to express them. The rule of course is not without exceptions, as we shall presently see. With recited sermons there is another difficulty: when the memory of the preacher fails him, his sole resource is gone. The difficulty and the awkwardness are extreme; there remains hardly an alterna-

tive but to pull the manuscript from his pocket, and try to find the forgotten sentence.

3. The third method of preaching—the *extempore* method—embraces many varieties of one species. It comprehends all that lies between two extremes—the practice of the man who chooses his text in the pulpit, or very shortly before going up to it, plunging into the wide sea without premeditation, and coming to land as best he may; and the practice of the man who, though only jotting his thoughts, carefully plans his discourse, lays out the trunk-line with great deliberation, arranges his thoughts and illustrations in careful order, and even bestows some pains on what may be called the joiner-work of his sermon, making each part of it fit naturally and readily to the rest. In all ordinary circumstances, it is only this last variety, or something near to it, that could find acceptance with a conscientious extempore preacher. It is impossible to reprobate too strongly the adoption of the extempore method on the ground that it is *the least troublesome*—that it saves the preacher from the drudgery of careful writing, or careful thinking. There is little doubt that preachers in remote parts of the country, with flocks small and obscure, and without the stimulus to mental effort which residence in a large and active town involves, are apt to become careless in preparation, and to fall into a style of extemporaneous preaching which is so vapid and pointless as to bring the pulpit into contempt. Young men, with all the lively impulses of youth upon them, and strong with the generous purpose "to scorn delights and live laborious days," are not likely to have any tolerance for such a habit. And yet one cannot be sure that if the fervour of youth has somewhat abated, and the sense of weariness that attends long and

laborious efforts has begun to come upon you, some of you may not be tempted to resort to this as the easier method. Country life is often not very favourable to the sustained habits of mental exertion, which, under any plan whatever, are unquestionably indispensable not merely to an efficient, but even to a conscientious ministry.

Of such extempore preaching as can thus alone be regarded as admissible, the great advantage is—the facility which it gives for freshness and naturalness of delivery, for arresting and maintaining the attention of the audience, for enabling the speaker to speak what he feels, and to feel what he speaks, and thus, with God's help, carry his hearers with him, through all the varieties of thought and feeling to which he may give expression in his discourse. "Of such a speaker," says M. Bautain,[1] "the language will be more forcible and brilliant, more real and more apposite. Originating with the occasion, and at the very moment, it will bear more closely on the subject, and strike with greater force and precision. His words will be warmer, from their freshness; they will in this manner communicate increased fervour to the audience, and will have all the energy of an instantaneous effort. The vitality of thought is singularly stimulated by this necessity of instantaneous production, by this actual necessity of self-expression, and of communication to other minds." It has the advantage, moreover, of not rigidly confining the preacher to what has been premeditated, but allowing him, like Chrysostom, to introduce remarks in the literal sense *ex tempore*, thoughts which may either be flashed into his mind with unusual vividness under the

[1] *The Art of Extempore Speaking.* By M. Bautain, Vicar-General and Professor of the Sorbonne. 1867.

excitement of preaching, or which may be suggested by what goes on at the time. Undoubtedly, a preacher presents himself to an audience under a great advantage, when he stands up to *speak* to them—to enter into that friendly relation which speaking implies. There is something in this, when modestly and respectfully done, that bespeaks their favourable consideration—unless their consciences shrink from plain faithful dealing; or unless their pride disdains the compulsion to listen; or unless a painful experience of that mode of preaching compels them to anticipate a mere outpouring of vapour, instead of a rich and solid repast.

In holding the balance between these several modes of preaching, or in trying to decide whether there be any way of combining the advantages of them all, some consideration requires to be had (1) of the *temperament* of individual preachers; (2) of the nature of the *subject;* and (3) of the nature of the *audience* and the *occasion.*

(1.) In regard to individual temperament. There may, in individuals, be qualities of temperament that divest the reading of sermons of the faults that are commonly associated with it. There may be unusual animation of spirit and of voice, and unusual emotional susceptibility, so that the feelings of the speaker cannot but go along with the thoughts expressed in the discourse,—his whole machinery, so to speak, being set in motion together. If to this gift of temperament there be added remarkable thinking power, and remarkable power of illustration and application, a read discourse, instead of being from that circumstance subject to drawbacks, will be an extraordinary treat. Such, emphatically, was the case with Chalmers, and such is the case, too, with other preachers that could be named. As the countrywoman said of Chalmers, his was *fell*

reading. The case of Chalmers was the more remarkable that the range of his emotion was so wide, and its intensity so great. There are instances of preachers, however, with a smaller range, and a lower tone of emotion, to whose temperament reading is suitable, because, as they read, the emotion which they are wont to express is readily roused in them. Perhaps we may say that Jonathan Edwards was a man of this type. He had neither the blazing impetuosity nor the wide range of Chalmers. But under his calm self-possessed manner lay a deep fountain of feeling, and it welled out calmly but powerfully with his favourite subjects of preaching. In general, for *read* sermons, three things may be laid down as absolutely indispensable: first, lively tones of voice; second, vigorous style; and third, interesting and rousing thoughts. If the preacher have a monotonous voice and a heavy style, if his thoughts are commonplace, and withal the sermon is long, it is no wonder if in popular estimation a read sermon becomes a synonym for dulness, a tax on the patience, and a temptation to sleep.

Again, there are temperaments to which the method of *reciting* seems well adapted. Such temperaments are not uncommon in France. The habitual liveliness of the French character, and the great amount of gesticulation with which the French speak, put the practice of reading sermons *hors de combat* in that country. On the other hand, their fondness for pointed, brilliant, epigrammatic diction, makes French orators unwilling to trust themselves to extemporaneous utterance. Recitation, therefore, has been the usual practice of the great French preachers. And for the most part, they seem to have been able to do what is so difficult for English preachers,—throw their soul into their recited

sermons, feel intensely as they went along. But even they were not beyond that sense of bondage which is so apt to prevail when success depends on the memory. "Which was the best sermon you ever preached?" some one once asked of Massillon. "That which I knew the best," was the significant reply. Bourdaloue, whose memory was less to be trusted, felt himself compelled to fall in with the practice; although, it is said, afraid lest the sight of the congregation should make him forget his lesson, he was compelled to preach with closed eyes. At the present day, however, a strong feeling has begun to prevail in France in favour of more extemporaneous preaching. Adolphe Monod urged it as being the best, when the speaker had a natural facility and was well prepared; without the last, he said, it was the worst of all methods, both for matter and for form. And in the work recently published by M. Bautain, Vicar-General and Professor at the Sorbonne, the adoption of the practice is urged strongly on the whole Roman Catholic clergy.

There are other temperaments, again, to which the extemporaneous method is the best adapted. Such, for example, was Robert Hall. Finical though he was about his language, he never wrote his sermons, and even the finest of them were elaborated mentally, while he lay on his back,—the attitude in which physical infirmity compelled him to study. When the proof-sheets of his celebrated sermon on Modern Infidelity were submitted to him, and he came to the apostrophe, "Eternal God, on what are thine enemies intent? What are those enterprises of guilt and horror, that for the safety of their performers, require to be enveloped in a darkness which the eye of heaven must not penetrate!" he asked, "did I say 'penetrate,' Sir,

when I preached it? Be so good as take your pencil, and for 'penetrate' put 'pierce'; no man who considered the force of the English language would use a word of three syllables there, but from absolute necessity. *Pierce* is the word, Sir, and the only word to be used there." A faculty of grasping a subject in its several dimensions and relations, a facility in making one's thoughts fall into clear order, and into plain language, coupled with a power of deliberation and self-possession, are indispensable to good extemporaneous preaching. Such are, to a large degree, the gifts of Mr. Spurgeon, whose sermons, though unwritten, exhibit a remarkable power of clear thought and forcible expression within the mental range in which he feels himself at home. Men who are apt to lose self-possession, whose mental organs seem to be struck with paralysis when they face an audience, and who are apt to flounder from topic to topic without doing justice to any, are not likely ever to feel at home with this method. And yet even in such cases, it is very wonderful what expertness may come of beginning early, and persevering steadily. As the Latin proverb says, *Fit fabricando faber.* Some of the most striking instances of failure in the attempt to preach extemporaneously have been in the case of preachers who had long been accustomed to another method. The "great clerks" that Shakespeare tells us have been seen to—

> "Shiver and look pale,
> Make periods in the midst of sentences;
> Throttle their practised accents in their fear,
> And in conclusion dumbly have broke off,"—

were probably accustomed to a different mode. Bishop Sanderson is said to have made an attempt before a village audience, that turned out a most mortifying and

humbling failure. Tillotson once tried his powers in the same way, and after beating and buffeting about for nearly ten minutes, brought his discourse to a close, declaring that nothing would induce him to make the attempt again. And South, who was in the habit of committing his sermons to memory, on one occasion of trusting himself to an extempore attempt, broke down in the very opening of his sermon, and with the exclamation, "Lord, be merciful to our infirmities," rushed abruptly from the pulpit.[1] Such failures, however, would probably not have occurred, and would certainly not have been so complete, had the method not been new to the preachers, and a great contrast to what they were accustomed to.

(2.) When we consider the *subjects* of sermons, as determining the right method of delivery, it becomes clear that writing and reading is the method best adapted to some. Such sermons, for example, as those of Bishop Butler, would never have seen the light as sermons, if the ordinance of King Charles II. had been rigidly enforced. But were they sermons? Are they not rather theological treatises? A preacher may sometimes see it his duty to go profoundly into certain subjects, in order to carry his people up to the higher reaches of Christian intelligence, or to help them to understand some of the more difficult aspects of divine truth. But if the practice of reading were wholly proscribed, such efforts would have to be abandoned. On other occasions a preacher may feel that he needs to use great discrimination and delicacy of language. He may find occasion to deal with forms of vice, all allusion to which is embarrassing before an audience embracing men, women, and children. Or he may have occasion

[1] Moore, p. 278, from *Quarterly Review*, cii. 491.

to delineate some type of character belonging to some of his people, and requiring to be sketched both delicately and truthfully. Or he may be treading on some of those narrow ledges of truth,—navigating some narrow strait, as it were, between a Scylla and a Charybdis,—where he requires to be careful of every word, lest a false conception be conveyed. It would be hard to say that such topics are to be proscribed, as in most cases they virtually would be, if reading from a manuscript were to be totally banished.

(3.) In regard to *audiences*, it may happen that when the congregation is made up chiefly of professional men, or of persons to whom the habit of attention is easy and common, a read discourse will be the most suitable. But if read, it must be well read, and good reading implies much practice and care; so that if one who has never practised reading should on some sudden occasion take to it, the likelihood is that the attempt would be a failure.

To come now to the practical question,—What method of preaching ought to be adopted by the young ministers of our day?

First, in regard to the *preparation* of sermons:—the advice which used to be given by Dr. Chalmers is that which we would humbly reiterate. Let every minister write out fully one discourse in the week, and let him preach another, extempore, or from notes more or less full. The habit of writing out one discourse, at least during twenty years of one's ministry, is attended with very many advantages. It disciplines one's own mind; it ties one down by the conscience to at least one piece of thorough work; it accustoms one to exactness of thinking and writing; it gives one the opportunity of deliberately examining one's work, and

of making systematic and continuous efforts to improve it.

While thus giving heed to writing, the young preacher will do well to accustom himself to deliver one discourse also from less elaborate preparation. That discourse, I need not say, will not be an extempore effort, pure and simple. The subject will be carefully studied as in the presence of his Master; the plan will be systematically formed; the course of thought firmly grasped, the illustrations and applications considered and arranged; and the transitions from point to point so managed as to give unity to the whole, and save the discourse from the character of a mere bundle of observations. How much of this will be written is a question of detail, not to be settled by another. Besides urging his students to cultivate both these modes of preaching, it was the advice of Chalmers that once a month, or at some such interval, they should prepare a more than usually elaborate discourse on some topic of deep interest—like his own on the Efficacy of Prayer and the Uniformity of Nature—or M'Laurin's Glorying in the Cross of Christ, or Jonathan Edwards's on Justification by Faith. He thought it good for the preacher and good for the flock to have to rise occasionally to the higher levels.

But when one discourse has been written and another sketched, how are they to be delivered? Is the written one to be read, or committed to memory, or is an abstract of it to be made, and notes made use of in the pulpit, similar to those which form the preparation for the more extempore discourse? To these questions the remarks already made on the several varieties of cases will furnish materials for the answer. In every case the preacher is bound to decide the matter as in

the presence of his Master, and as one lying under the most solemn obligations to present the truth in the most impressive form, and with the largest amount of persuasive power. Be his method what it may, his business is to *deliver* his message, and the right force of that word must never be evaded. Ask the soldier what is meant by the delivery of a charge—ask the merchant what is meant by the delivery of a piece of merchandise —ask even the letter-carrier what is meant by the delivery of a letter: all will tell you that the thing in question must be lodged in the persons, or in the premises of those for whom it is designed. The true delivery of a sermon, in like manner, means lodging it in the heads and hearts of the audience. There are always two factors in the process—first, the clear presentation of the truth, and, second, the dynamical force sending it home. For efficacy, both depend and both depend alike on a heavenly power. But as no intelligent preacher dreams that, since it is the office of the Holy Spirit to enlighten, it matters not whether the truth be presented by him clearly or confusedly; so no intelligent preacher dreams that, because it is the office of the Holy Spirit to apply truth savingly, he needs not to take any pains to make his message telling. The best preacher is he who combines both, and in both seeks to be an instrument in the Spirit's hands.

In general we may say, that in proportion to the hold which the preacher has of his subject, or, better still, his subject of him, will be his hold on his hearers. If he holds the truth feebly, his power over his audience will be feeble; if he holds it firmly, and, still more, if he is possessed by it almost to the verge of enthusiasm, he will speak like one having authority, and his word will be with power. The more that his own soul is

exercised by the truth on which he prepares during the week to discourse, the more powerfully (other things being equal) will he be sure to preach. In order that his soul may be duly moved, and in order that he may get the right tone and spirit, let him ever, as he is preparing, have his audience before him; let him remember the utter deadness and worldliness of one section, the gross temptations of another, and the tremendous forces with which the devil, the world, and the flesh are ever opposing him and his work. Let him remember that the time which he occupies on the Lord's Day is the one golden hour of the week when the sin-driven and world-worn sinner is to get his glimpse of heaven, and to be plied with the truths that, if he is ever to be saved, must bear down the strongest tendencies of his carnal heart. There, in your audience, is a young man exposed all the week to the sneers, and to the profane and filthy language, of the other occupants of the counting-room; yonder is a young woman persecuted by her family for her earnest efforts to serve the Lord; there you have a working man driven the whole week in rough employments that develop little more than his animal nature; yonder a mother heart-broken for her profligate husband or her reckless son; there a student beset with sceptical doubts; yonder a merchant haunted by the spectre of bankruptcy. Oh, what an art it is to arrest the attention of them all, and pour into their souls the living water, of which he that drinks shall never thirst again! What a prayerful habit would the preacher need to have while brooding over his sermon, as well as on the eve of its delivery! What power is needed to accompany every sentence, that it may be truly an engine for opening men's eyes, and for turning them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God!

CHAPTER XIII.

PULPIT ELOCUTION AND MANNER.

THE subject of pulpit elocution, or, more properly, the right management of voice, gesture, and look in preaching, may seem to some a sorry and trifling one to be introduced in a course of theological instruction; but a very slight consideration of some of the bearings of the subject will be enough to dissipate such an impression. The principle laid down by our Lord in his memorable command to the disciples after the miracle of the loaves and fishes, to gather up the fragments that remained, *that nothing might be lost*, brings within the range of duty many things that might otherwise be ranked with trifles. A Christian conscience thoroughly disciplined will be careful to gather up every fragment of influence, seeing that the object is not to supply the body with the bread that perisheth, but immortal souls with the bread of life. Can it be maintained that no fragments of influence are ever lost in respect of inefficient management of the voice, the gesture, and the countenance in the pulpit? It is said that the poet Thomson was once reading to a friend a part of *The Seasons* in his usual slovenly way, when his friend snatched the manuscript from his hands, declaring that he could not bear to hear good poetry so shamefully murdered. Was no such

murder ever committed in the pulpit? Was no admirable discourse, faultless in conception and composition, ever presented to a congregation in the condition of Hector's body, after it had been dragged round the walls of Troy? Is there no ground for one of the questions asked by Bishop Berkeley in his *Querist*, "Whether half the learning and study of these kingdoms is not useless for want of a proper delivery and pronunciation being taught in our schools and colleges?" It may be doubted whether the evil is ascribed wholly to the right cause, or whether teaching a proper delivery and elocution in our schools and colleges would altogether remedy it, but that there is a vast amount of remediable inefficiency in the pulpit, through defective or vicious delivery, is a fact that cannot be questioned. It may be true that manner is but of secondary importance; but it is equally true that it is of some importance, nay, as the world goes, of great importance. What Demosthenes said of action, or rather of delivery, has passed into a household word,—that it was the first, and the second, and the third essential of true oratory. We may not be disposed to estimate it so high; but if any one should talk of manner as a thing of no consequence, we would ask him, Is there such absolute power in good and well-composed thoughts, that in expressing them you can afford to dispense with the aid of a suitable manner or an impressive delivery? Certainly it is not so in other departments. An anecdote is greatly more impressive, in common conversation, when it is well told; the difference is marvellous when a story comes haltingly and helplessly from a stammering tongue, and fluently and heartily from one who has the *knack* of telling it. Is there no real loss when solemn thoughts are expressed in a sharp, shrill key? or when matters pertaining to

everyday life are handled in the most solemn, sepulchral tones? Is monotony no clog to delivery, no hindrance to impression? Is it not sometimes distressing to observe how little men appreciate a substantial preacher, whose manner is heavy, compared with a superficial one whose manner is attractive and impressive? Are not men who shine at college for their intellectual gifts like stars of the first magnitude, sometimes outstripped by those of far inferior intellect, but possessing a more popular manner? You say it is the fault of the stupid public. And yet we ought not to be too hard on the public for its want of appreciation. It is more appreciative in its own fashion than is often thought. At least it is not slow to appreciate anything like life in a preacher, and it is not for the sake of profound intellect, but for the sake of life that our Lord has constituted the ministry the chief means of perpetuating his Church.

It is never to be forgotten that the ministry has been instituted because it is a *living* agency, and because the functions which it has to discharge demand, above everything else, the qualities of life. Had it not been for this, it would have been easy to devise a better provision for the edification of the body of Christ, and the other purposes of the Church. For example, without any ministry, there might have been a larger Bible, in which every man might have found directly all that was necessary for his spiritual instruction. Or men might have been appointed to collect the best theological treatises and the most able discourses, and read these to the people. The few great preachers of each successive age might thus have been set free to labour among the heathen, extending the limits of the Christian Church. Handfuls of population in remote parts

of the country might have been provided for, without the expensive machinery of a settled ministry. Why then has the Head of the Church preferred the method of the standing ministry? Partly, doubtless, that provision may be made for adapting the form in which the truth is presented to the ever-changing necessities of times and seasons; but partly also, that when presented to men, the truth may have all the advantage derived from the living heart and living voice, the living eye and the living manner, of the person who communicates it. He who preaches in a slovenly way not merely damages his own reputation, and fails in his duty to his congregation, but he compromises the wisdom of Christ in the institution of the ministry, and especially of the ordinance of preaching; he makes his Master appear to have acted foolishly. It is not merely the intellect that should preach, but every organ and faculty of the preacher. The voice, the face, the eye, the body, the hands, must all (if possible) be pressed into the service. As Luther said, there must be the "vividus vultus, vividi oculi, vividæ manus, denique omnia vivida." The pulpit would then vindicate itself, and stand in no risk of losing its place and its power amid the many rising intellectual instruments of the age.

Yet let no one fancy for a moment that this state of things can be brought about by a complicated array of artificial rules for the management of the voice, the waving of the arms, the twirling of the fingers, or the rolling of the eye. Though it was said truly of Cicero that there was eloquence even in the tips of his fingers, and of Garrick that by merely moving his elbow he could produce an effect that no words could achieve, it is not to be recommended to young preachers to move their fingers like Cicero, or their elbows like Garrick.

Artificial rules of this sort are the very bane of the pulpit, and the ruin of young preachers. They produce an affectation and a self-consciousness which, instead of a help, are a great hindrance to efficiency. People justly lift up their voices against *acting* in the pulpit—against everything that implies that the sermon, and particularly the prayers, are *got-up* performances, and not the genuine utterances of the mind and soul.[1]

The simple general rule which we are concerned to press in reference to manner in the pulpit is—*be*

[1] Goethe shows the difference between genuine production and artificial cooking :—

Wagner.—"I've often heard them boast, a preacher
Might profit with a player for his teacher.
Faust.—Yes, when the preacher is a player, granted
(As often happens in our modern ways).
Wagner.—Ah! when one with such love of study 's haunted,
And scarcely sees the world on holidays,
And takes a spy-glass, as it were, to read it,
How can one by persuasion hope to lead it?
Faust.—What you don't feel, you 'll never catch by hunting;
It must gush out spontaneous from the soul,
And, with a fresh delight enchanting
The hearts of all that hear control,
Sit there for ever! Thaw your glue-pot—
Blow up your ash-heap to a flame and brew,
With a dull fire, in your stew-pot
Of other men's leavings a ragout!
Children and apes will gaze delighted
If their critiques can pleasure impart,
But never a heart will be ignited
Comes not the spark from the speaker's heart.
Wagner.—Delivery makes the orator's success,
Tho' I 'm still far behindhand, I confess.
Faust.—Seek honest gains, without pretence!
Be not a cymbal-tinkling fool!
Sound understanding and good sense
Speak out with little art or rule:
And when you 've something earnest to utter,
Why hunt for words in such a flutter?
Yes, your discourses that are so refined,
In which humanity's poor shreds you frizzle,
Are unrefreshing as the mist and wind
That thro' the withered leaves of autumn whistle."

FAUST—*Brooke's translation.*

natural. Feel what you say, and say what you feel, and in saying it, say it as you feel it, and let the feeling mould your voice, your gesture, and your countenance, in the natural way. Simple though this advice is, it is not very easy. To some persons the most difficult thing in the world is to be natural. The model of a perfectly natural manner is to be found,—some would say rather low down,—in a little child. Who has not observed the perfect grace, freedom, naturalness, of a little child's whole manner? Its tones of voice are exactly adapted to the nature of its remarks; its eye and face are a perfect mirror of its heart; the movement of its arms, the gesture of its whole body, is free and unrestrained. If one would attain a good manner in the pulpit, one must in a sense become a little child. If the reasons be sought for the faultlessness of a child's manner, they are to be found in its guilelessness and reality, the transparency of its whole nature, in its freedom from acquired habits, in the elasticity and vigour of its muscular system, and, last not least, its want of self-consciousness. If on the other hand, you ask why so many grown persons have an unnatural manner, the answer will consist in reversing the conditions just enumerated; it is from want of reality and guilelessness; from a desire to appear in some way other than they are; from indolent habits, muscular stiffness (arising from want of physical exercise), and last not least, an oppressive self-consciousness. Against all such things you must resolutely contend.

Although no confidence is to be placed in artificial rules of manner, yet in order to give nature fair play, it becomes necessary to give some directions, chiefly for avoiding or correcting faults unconsciously contracted. The great object is to give free scope to nature, but for

this purpose we must remove the bandages and fetters that habit has thrown round her.

To three things in particular it is necessary to attend—the voice, the gesture of the body, and the expression of the face.

1. The voice. The rule which requires us to be natural is highly necessary in dealing with the voice, but not in the sense of forbidding any improvement or expansion of its original capacity. On the contrary, the cultivation and mastery of the voice is one of the most essential things to a good delivery. "The voice," says Adolphe Monod, "ought to be exercised frequently and with care. Strive to render your voice at once clear, strong, sonorous, and flexible; nothing but practice will accomplish this. Take pains to become master of your voice. Whoever succeeds in this will discover many resources even in a very poor voice, and will achieve wonders with little fatigue. But the greater part of preachers are slaves to their voice; it controls them instead of their controlling it. The voice possesses wonderful capabilities, but it is a rebellious instrument. We ought not to believe that the daily exercises which are necessary for controlling it and making it flexible do harm to the chest. If they are taken in moderation, they will rather strengthen it; hence some skilful physicians prescribe singing and reading aloud for delicate persons. The time most favourable for these exercises is an hour or two after a meal; the stomach ought to be neither too full nor too empty." [1]

Of all men engaged in public speaking none needs to pay more attention to the culture of the voice than the Scottish Presbyterian minister. If it be true

[1] Éloquence Sacrée; Discours par Adolphe Monod.—(*Revue Théologique*, 1841, pp. 278-79).

generally, "that the Anglo-Saxon race are less gifted vocally, have the vocal apparatus naturally in less perfection, and artificially in worse order, than any other variety of Indo-Europeans,"[1]—the remark, we fear, must be held to have a special application to Scotchmen. "As a rule," Mr. Hullah observes, "the English voice, if not always of inferior quality, is almost always in intensity or capacity inferior to (for instance) the Italian, the German, or the Welsh. No people give expression to their thoughts, *i.e. utter* (not choose) their words, so imperfectly and with such an absence of charm as our countrymen. To the foreign and unaccustomed ear the English language sounds, as to the foreign eye the Welsh language looks, made up of consonants, and these hardly distinguishable from one another." North of the Border we cannot be accused of so thoroughly neglecting our vowels, but we are apt to sound them as if it were a sin to make them liquid and musical; and what we do utter is often in a husky or drawling tone. Compared with the Englishman's the Scotchman's voice naturally has less of metallic ring, compared with the Irishman's less of musical fluency, and compared with the American's less of downright emphasis, and happily less of the nasal intonation. A theory has been hazarded, that the muscles of the lower jaw are more feeble in the Scotchman than in the other sections of the family. If it be so, it must be because they are less exercised—he takes his speaking more easily. When the ventriloquist or the player wishes to speak as a typical Scotchman, it is with husky voice and muttered tones, a mouth that hardly opens, and a jaw that scarcely moves.

In a church which makes no use of a liturgy, the

[1] *The Speaking Voice*, by John Hullah, p. 1.

whole business of edification depends on the voice of the officiating minister. If he be not distinctly heard, the whole service is a failure. In liturgical churches imperfect hearing is aided greatly by the use of the prayer-book. In the Presbyterian service there is no such aid. Moreover, with the exception of the time taken up in singing, the voice of the minister is the only sound that is heard from first to last. It would really need to be a pleasant one. One of the secret but most effectual causes of weariness in church is to be found in the roughness, harshness, or monotony that sometimes characterizes the preacher's voice. An hour and a half is a long time for a child to listen to a sound resembling the barking of a dog, the croaking of a raven, the cooing of a wood-pigeon, or the rasping of a corn-crake.[1] On the other hand, a voice of good quality and compass is an element of enjoyment, and obviates the rise of a craving for artificial embellishments of of worship. And still further, on another ground, viz., the preacher's own health and comfort, the cultivation and expansion of the vocal organs is of high importance. The undue straining of these organs is apt to produce what is popularly known as the *morbus clericus*, or minister's throat, a disorder which usually requires for its cure a long suspension of labour, and entails much anxiety, the loss of perhaps a year of the best part of ministerial life, and no small inconvenience and expense. Even where no disease is gendered, the fight in the pulpit with a feeble voice produces a discomfort

[1] Even a superior voice is apt to become wearisome when unrelieved for a long time. Revival preachers resort to the device of singing a hymn, as a solo, in the middle of the sermon. I have observed that even one of our finest lady readers of Shakespeare, in reading Hamlet, greatly relieved and enlivened the reading by *singing* the little lyrical pieces that occur here and there.

resembling that which attends the fight of a traveller with a blustering wind. It produces, too, a self-consciousness, a painful tendency to think about himself, when his mind should be filled with his subject. On the other hand, where the voice is easy and efficient, and readily obeys all the movements of the preacher's heart and mind, his own enjoyment in the exercise is so much the greater, and, *ceteris paribus*, the efficiency of his ministrations is so much increased.

Some of the false modes of speaking into which preachers have been apt to fall arise from over-straining, while others arise from nervousness, or from an affectation to appear different from what they are. The falsetto tone, the high key in which some preachers speak, is probably due to overstraining, the habit being formed of confining themselves to the one note which penetrates furthest, and is most distinctly heard. The oratorical roll which others affect, is in some cases the result of the idea that it is dignified and impressive, and in other cases it arises from nervousness and timidity; it is a sort of protection to a timid man. It enables him to keep at a certain distance from the people, though this, of course, just diminishes his efficiency. Another false tone, a sort of persuasive whine, arises from an overstraining after simplicity and affectionateness, and sometimes it is the result of imitation. In many cases all these unnatural modes of speaking are the effect of unreality, the words not coming from the heart, or at least not coming from a heart exercised at the time in accordance with the words. Undoubtedly, this unreality is one of the greatest enemies of efficiency in the pulpit; nor could any motto be suggested more thoroughly useful and appropriate to guide the young preacher than

the Apostle's words—"*We believe, therefore have we spoken.*"

For remedying these and similar evils, much heed should be taken to the starting words of a discourse. In preparing the sermon, as the preacher is settling what the first words of it ought to be, it may be useful for him to consider whether they are thoroughly real, whether he will be able to speak these words to the people, and not merely to deliver them before them. Will he be able to *enter their minds* with them,—will they establish a real communication between his mind and theirs? He must begin, as much as possible on the ordinary key of his voice—the bell-note, as it is sometimes called,—rising and falling from it, as the occasion may require. By this means, his voice is less likely to become unmanageable; he will be able to preserve its natural inflections, to the great saving of his own strength, and the great advantage of his hearers. While thus striving to be real and natural, and to get as near to his audience as possible, he will be kept from unsuitable familiarity of tone or manner by remembering that he is the ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that he is speaking of the most important things that can engage the attention of immortal men.

In the details included in the due management of the voice, there is none of more importance than *distinctness of articulation.* Very many young preachers err in fancying that loudness is the quality most necessary in order to their being heard, whereas loudness is far inferior to distinctness. In order to distinctness, the habit of running many words together must be avoided, and the endeavour made to give to every syllable, and as far as possible to every letter, its own proper sound. Of course, the habit of distinct articulation may be carried

the length of a poor pedantry, and there may be such a conspicuous effort after this, as to defeat its own end, by drawing attention not to what the speaker is saying, but to the way in which he is saying it. But here we may again listen to the practical counsels of the late Adolphe Monod, whose eminence both as a preacher and as a man of the highest spirituality of character, gives him a special claim to our attention.

"You must learn," he says, "to give to each vowel the sound which belongs to it, and to make for each consonant the appropriate movement. This latter point is the more important of the two. If the purity of the vowel sounds contributes much to the beauty of speaking, it is mainly the articulation of the consonants that gives it distinctness, vigour, and expression. One who articulates distinctly can be heard a long way off without shouting, and even without sounding the vowels much; and this is the method to which actors have recourse on the stage when representing the undertones of persons dying; they lay stress on the consonants and suppress the vowel sounds. But he who articulates indistinctly will never be heard at a distance, and in making his vowels emphatic, he will only add to the confusion." We have here the explanation of what is often regarded as a mystery by many of our people—preachers with powerful voices being less distinctly heard in large buildings than men with feebler pipe, but more deliberate articulation. The only thing that it seems necessary to add to Mr. Monod's instructions on this point is, that special respect ought to be paid to the last letter of every word, on the principle that if you do justice to it, you are likely to do justice to all that go before it. But no one should begin to practise such rules as these in the pulpit. They should

be mastered in youth, in the course of those practisings and rehearsings which ought to precede pulpit efforts, so that by the time the pulpit is reached, they may have become a second nature, neither giving trouble to the preacher, nor diverting the attention of the hearer.

On the subject of conventional pronunciation it may be well to say a few words. There is no subject that more thoroughly defies rule than the pronunciation of the English language, and yet there is hardly any to which the public speaker has more need to attend. In Scotland, we are blamed for our broadness, while in England the tendency is to elide important letters for the sake of smoothness. If on this side the border we sometimes give the sound of four *r's* instead of one, on the other they often give the sound of none. In England, the tendency to smoothness has gradually effected a revolution in the pronunciation of the language. Shakespeare, it is said by those who have investigated the subject, would hardly know his own plays if he heard them recited with the pronunciation of the present day. The *gh* which is now so uniformly omitted in the middle of words was sounded then, and in such words as mighty, almighty (pronounced somewhat like michty, almichty, but with a deeper guttural), they contributed to increase the force of the word. The Admirable Crichton would not recognise his name now in the smooth form which it has assumed. There is no need therefore for our being in haste to adopt the smoothness which has become so fashionable. What we have more need to do, is to find out and correct our more glaring and undeniable faults. We unconsciously fall into vicious and ludicrous errors of pronunciation without being aware of it. We substitute one vowel for another without a dream of the change.

We fail to give their due force to double letters, or we make double letters instead of single, or we sound simple vowels as diphthongs—saying *iver* for *ever*, *ind* for *and*, *sawbath* for *sabbath*, *grawmar* for *grammar*, *daith* for *death*, *mirracle* for *miracle*, and so on. Small though such points are, they are the little things that make the difference between a pronunciation which for ever grates on the cultivated ear, and that which drops on it pleasantly. We lose nothing by being correct on such points, and there can be little doubt as to what is right in such cases; it is that which is closer to the spelling of the words, and to the ordinary force of the letters; while the mispronunciations that prevail may be traced, either to carelessness, or to want of musical ear, or to provincial habits. On the other hand, there are many peculiarities of fashionable pronunciation that deviate from the natural and normal sound of the letters, and which are therefore to be regarded with suspicion. But the details on such points are obviously to be learned from the elocution class, and the pronouncing dictionary.

Another point of much importance in speaking is that of respiration. When the lungs are well filled at the beginning of each sentence, the words come out both more easily and more distinctly, being floated out as it were on a current of air, instead of squeezed out by sheer muscular force. In such a case, too, the business of public speaking is far less fatiguing. All that is necessary is to get into a habit of inflating the lungs during the momentary pauses in speaking. It is a simple rule, but one that carries very large results. As Monod points out, it corrects an error as serious as it is common, of letting the voice droop at the end of a sentence. "This is the abuse of a rule which nature

indicates. It is natural to let the voice fall quickly the moment of finishing a clause, at least in most cases; for there are some thoughts that require the voice to be raised at the end. But some speakers make the fall too great, and there are often three or four words at the close which are heard with difficulty, or not heard at all. As a general rule, the voice must be kept up to the end of the sentence, except to make the slight fall that denotes the completion of the sense. But for this, timely respiration is requisite; it is the exhaustion of the lungs that makes the voice droop; when there is no breath in the lungs, there can be no sound from the lips."

2. The next point to which attention has to be called is the gesture or action of the body suitable for the pulpit. On this, little more can be said than that we should try to avoid or correct bad habits, and to give nature fair play. Let a man's bodily parts be free to follow the impulse of his heart, it is not likely that he will make the offer of the gospel, as Dr. James Hamilton said he had known preachers do, with clenched fists, that he will bend over the pulpit in depicting the horrors of perdition, or gaze up to the ceiling while remonstrating with the erring and the careless.

Two causes, however, must be mentioned which tend to interfere with the free movements of the body in correspondence with the emotions of the soul. One is —*muscular stiffness*, arising from want of exercise, from the sedentary habits that are common in the case of students and preachers, and from their not taking much part in those games and sports which, accompanied though they often are with various evils and drawbacks, do certainly give ease, strength, and development to the bodily frame. The other cause of inefficient action is

timidity. A nervous man is afraid to suit the action to the word—to raise his arm, or move his body, thinking it better not to try it at all, than run the risk of doing it badly. But in any case, temperament has much to do with action. A man of very still temperament will find it much more difficult to use action than one to whom nature has given great vivacity. To a French preacher action is as natural and as indispensable as to many a Scotchman it is difficult, if not impossible. Yet when the Scotchman listens to the Frenchman, and observes how much help he derives in keeping hold of his audience from the quick movements of his body, the ease and fearlessness with which he can throw it into any suitable attitude, the wide compass of his voice, and the elasticity of his countenance, he cannot but feel that it is a great disadvantage for him to be unable to wield this instrument of impression. Where discourses are read from the pulpit, the amount of action, in all ordinary cases, must be but small. There can be but few Chalmerses, who, though reading every word, accompany the discourse with an overwhelming vehemence. In general, the best counsel as to manner for young preachers in this country would seem to be, to attempt but little at the beginning, but as they gather experience and confidence, try to let their soul out more and more through the various bodily organs; looking well to this, that it is the soul that works through the body, and not the body that merely apes the working of the soul.

3. We come now to the expression of the face; on which, however, we have little to say. That the face may become a very powerful helper to the preacher is evident from the fact that in most cases its expression is so thoroughly under the influence of the soul. Of

course, there are great differences here—from the proverbially impassive and unchanging countenance of a Disraeli, which defies the most skilful physiognomist to find in its features the slightest clue to his thoughts or feelings; to those open and transparent faces in which the soul is seen in all its varied moods of joy and sorrow, hope and fear, disgust and delight. It is not to be expected that the defect of nature in this respect can altogether be supplied. We know that some natures are demonstrative, and some are not. The demonstrative are generally the more popular, but not always the most trustworthy. But there is no merit in being undemonstrative. In the pulpit, on the contrary, it is a positive defect. Why should a preacher suppress the emotion which is working in his heart, and which his words express? Why should he be ashamed to speak by his countenance the very thing that he is speaking by his tongue? Is it more likely that he will be believed when one of the organs of expression is silent? A man ought to feel that he is bound in conscience to preach with his face as well as with his voice. And the people expect it. Why do they always prefer a seat where they can have a full view of the preacher? Because they know that if he be what he ought to be, it will be an advantage to them to see his face as well as to hear his voice. They at least know that nature has adapted the eye and the other features for preaching purposes. Sometimes those who hear but indifferently are able to gather a good deal from watching the speaker's face. There is something quite remarkable in the way in which some of the features express the soul. The eye, for example. What a variety of emotions the eye can appropriately represent! It sparkles

with intelligence, flashes with indignation, melts with grief, trembles with pity, languishes with love, twinkles with humour, starts with amazement, or shrinks with horror, according to the impulse given to it by the soul within. A dog knows from his master's eye whether he is about to be caressed or kicked. Gamblers are said to be able to judge of the hand of their opponents from their eye and countenance. Wild animals, like the lion, are said to quail before the steady gaze of a fearless man. And God himself uses the eye as the symbol of his influence: "I will guide thee with mine eye." Why should such an organ not be pressed into the service of the pulpit? Or why should it be thought that God's effectual power goes solely with the voice, and not with any other organ?

It is to be remarked that to those who are not overpowered by the aspect of a great public assembly, there is something in their very appearance, and in their eager waiting on the ministrations of the preacher, that greatly helps him. Audiences like those gathered in St. Paul's or in Westminster Abbey have a wonderfully stimulating power. The whole energies work more vigorously and more fearlessly; a sympathy is created between the preacher and the audience that imparts a power and a pleasure of a kingly order.

This subject has at least one great practical issue: we must feel deeply and truly, if our voice, our face, and our manner are to be right. The heart must be the prime regulator of all. Emotion must be gendered there, and then flow out through tongue, eyes, arms, face, and everything. Once more let us hear Adolphe Monod. "The tones of the soul are the tones of nature. It is these tones that tend to reproduce themselves.

The hearer must recognise himself—must feel that the tones are genuine. For us it is requisite that we speak, not declaim. I have said before, Elevate, ennoble the tone of conversation and of common life; but in raising it, do not abandon it. An able painter does not slavishly copy all the features of his model; he idealizes them, he does not commit them to the canvas without having subjected them to a kind of transfiguration under his brain; but by idealizing, he retains so much of them that they may be readily recognised, and it is in this way that a portrait is a perfect likeness and often more beautiful than nature. The process is similar in a good delivery. The tones of ordinary life are improved, and yet they are easily to be recognised because the essential parts of them are carefully preserved. But to declaim—to assume a new tone because you have entered a pulpit, to speak, in short, as people never speak, is a great fault, and, what is very singular, a very common one, and hard to conquer, and never perhaps to be altogether eradicated. It is because it is easier to keep the tone sustained and always equal than to follow step by step the thought and the feeling in their endless changes, and because one is never without some hearers of bad taste, who are imposed upon by a pompous utterance. Nevertheless, gentlemen, if you consider merely the human effect of your preaching, if you don't consider that an unworthy point of view, the man who *speaks* in the pulpit will in the end carry the day over the man who declaims. Even those hearers who are dazzled by the cadences of fine periods and the tricks of the voice yet weary in the end, and prefer to the noisy preacher one whose tone alone constrains them to feel that he thinks all that he says. And what shall I say of the

difference of real results in the case of the two preachers? How much more surely will the latter find the way to the heart and conscience! How his moments of earnestness will be relieved by his calm tone and simple ordinary delivery! How much more will he be what he ought to be, before God and before man, being himself, and not violating truth in order to proclaim truth! Yes, gentlemen, if you wish to reach a worthy, Christian, impressive style of preaching, speak always with simplicity. Utter things as you feel. Put no more warmth in your utterance than there is in your heart. This honesty of expression (if I may so call it), far from making your discourse cold, will constrain you to throw into it a warmth more real, more profound, than you will reach by any other way. It will react on your composition and even on your soul in a wholesome way. For in showing things as they are, it will expose your faults, and urge you to correct them.

"I have spoken of the pulpit. If this were the place to speak of the stage, there would be many things to be said to the point. Great actors never declaim, they speak. Talma, whom I have named so often, began, like others, with declaiming. An interesting circumstance made him feel the necessity of adopting a new manner, more in conformity with nature; and from that day he became in his profession a new man, and produced a prodigious impression. Those who have heard him will tell you that the extreme simplicity of his play astounded them, and that they were tempted to think of him as an ordinary man, who had no advantage over others except his magnificent voice; but ere long the natural subdued them, and the vivid impressions

made on them compelled them to see that it was from its simplicity that his manner derived both its force and its originality."[1]

[1] "We were rhetoricians," said Talma, "not men. What fine academic discourses upon the theatre! how few simple words! But one evening, chance led me to a saloon where I was in company with the chiefs of the Girondists; their sombre, uneasy appearance arrested my attention. There were there, in visible representation, interests both great and powerful. They were far too sincere to be blinded by egotism—in that I found a plain proof of the dangers of the country. They proceeded to discuss and to touch questions of burning interest. It was very fine. I fancied myself present at one of the secret deliberations of the Roman Senate. 'One ought to speak in that manner,' I said to myself. 'A country—be it France or Rome—expresses itself in the same tone, the same language; if these men are not declaiming now, there could have been no declamation in the olden time; that is plain.' I became more attentive. My impressions, though produced by a conversation free from any excitement, became profound. 'A calm appearance in men deeply moved stirs up the soul,' I remarked; 'eloquence may then produce its effect without the body being distorted by disorderly movements!' I perceived that the speech, though produced without effort and excitement, made the effect more decided, and the countenance more expressive. All the deputies that happened to be present appeared to me more powerful by their simplicity than on the tribune, where, being in public, they thought it necessary to deliver harangues after the manner of actors, such actors as we were then, that is, declaimers full of bombastic nonsense. From that hour I got a new light, and the regeneration of my art flashed upon me."

CHAPTER XIV.

DEVOTIONAL SERVICES.

ALTHOUGH it is no part of our business in this place to discuss the question of liturgies or free prayer, it may be useful to state the substance of the leading arguments *pro* and *con.*, to help us to obtain a full view of the subject, and have under our eye all that is to be aimed at on the one hand, and avoided on the other, in our devotional services. All who consider the question candidly will admit that on both sides of the question there are not a few arguments of considerable weight.

On the side of liturgies it may be urged that the Psalms are essentially a liturgy; that it is a great advantage for worshippers to know beforehand what prayers are to be offered, that they may be able to join in them intelligently and heartily; that a liturgy affords facilities unknown to free prayer for combining the whole congregation in the service, and drawing out their responses to the petitions; that the fact of their offering the same great petitions which have risen from the Church in all past ages, and are at the time rising from their brethren throughout the whole world, stirs the heart and stimulates devotion; that by the use of a liturgy it is comparatively easy for small companies

to unite in public worship, even where no ordained minister is present; that congregations in general are not left in absolute dependence for devotional help on the officiating minister, who may be sadly deficient both in the gifts and grace of prayer; and that liturgies admit of a conciseness in the substance, and a beauty and finish in the language of prayer, fitted to impress the worshipper and promote reverential feeling.

On the other hand, on behalf of free prayer it may be urged that it diminishes the risk of that cold, lifeless formality which the continual use of the same form of words is apt to produce; that more encouragement is given to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who alone can enable us to offer acceptable prayer; that by this means the gift and the grace of prayer may be greatly developed; that graceless and prayerless men are less tempted to enter the ministry; that abundant and very precious opportunities are afforded for adapting the prayer either to the special state and wants of the congregation, or to events in Providence occurring *ex tempore;* that though the worshippers may not know beforehand the precise particulars of the prayers to be offered in public, they are generally well aware what their purport will be, especially if the Spirit of grace and supplication is poured out; and that if the congregation will but give attention, they will be at no loss for opportunities of making responses in their hearts—the only true responses—to the petitions that are offered.

Into the controversy on this subject, we say, we do not mean to enter; partly because we do not see any good reason for pitting the one method so exclusively against the other as is done in controversy, or for refusing to entertain the question of a combination of both.

It is an advantage we gain in quiet times, when the catholic rather than the controversial spirit is in the ascendant, that such questions can be studied calmly, and without that controversial bitterness and vehemence which goes so often to widen and perpetuate differences. But the question more immediately before us at present is, in what manner we may best conduct the public devotions of our congregations according to the method in use among us. The fact that in neighbouring churches liturgies are much used, and are often greatly prized by the devout for their special advantages, may serve to illustrate our responsibility in this department of service, and the duty thence arising to qualify ourselves for it in the best possible manner.

It is undoubtedly a grave charge, for which there is but too much occasion, that in our churches the devotional part of the service is often conducted with little care and preparation. It may happen that if a preacher has fluency enough in the language of prayer to carry him on for the usual time without difficulty, he does not think what he is to pray for, until he rises with the congregation to begin the exercise. The prayer which he offers may have many faults, or it may have few; it may possibly be an excellent prayer; but is it conscientious, is it respectful to God, is it fair to the congregation for the man who is to be their mouthpiece at the throne of grace, to rush into so solemn and momentous a service with hardly a thought of it beforehand? He may do it well enough, remarkably well in the circumstances,—but can it be that he will do it in *the best possible manner?* And is this a service that a conscientious servant of God should be content to do except in the best possible way? Is it likely that he will be able to represent the wants and

feelings of the congregation in the most correct and comprehensive manner? Will the selection of topics be the very best? Will nothing be left out that ought to be included? Will his soul not be somewhat slow of kindling into fervour, beginning perhaps to glow only when it is time to stop? Will he be able to combine fervour of spirit and absorption of soul in the exercise, with an orderly regard to all that his prayer is to embrace? Will the language be of that transparent, direct, simple, yet beautiful order, of which the psalms, and all the prayers and anthems of Scripture, are so remarkable examples? Will the prayer be free from repetitions, clumsinesses, circumlocutions, and other incumbrances, which Bible prayers never contain? Who can say that it will? Or who can say that it is right to trust all to the Spirit helping our infirmities at the moment, if we neglect what we might do beforehand towards the more thorough performance of the duty?

It is often thrown out as a reproach against our services, that the preaching is everything, and the devotional exercises little or nothing. Our people do not hesitate to say that they go to church to hear their minister, subordinating to this the thought of worshipping God. When they have listened to a discourse which has pleased them, they are said to be more in the spirit of glorifying their pastor than exalting their God and Saviour. To a certain extent there is truth in this charge, but not so much as is often alleged. We *do* lay great stress on preaching; it *is* the most prominent part of our service; but it is a great error to suppose that right preaching has no direct bearing upon right worship. Without a great deal of right preaching there will be little or no right worship. Worship will become per-

vaded by the spirit of formalism, or sacramentarianism, or superstition. Our altars will be altars to an unknown God. Intelligent and evangelical preaching lies at the very foundation of intelligent and evangelical worship. Men must know GOD before they can understand what worship he requires. They must know THEMSELVES to understand the footing on which they stand to God, and their miserable shortcomings in his sight. They must know the MEDIATOR, in order to get near to God by the new and living way, and have confidence towards him. They must know the HOLY SPIRIT, the only author of spiritual worship. They must know the SCRIPTURES, where alone they have the revelation of God, of themselves, of Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit.

Further, preaching is not merely adapted to communicate the knowledge, but also to rouse the *feelings* that are connected with true worship. Very miserable and inefficient preaching truly it will be if it have no tendency to rouse these feelings. Whatever tends to convince men of their sins, and humble them before God—whatever serves to exalt the grace of God in Christ, to commend His love, to impress the infinitude of His mercy on the one hand, and the strength of His claims on the other—whatever goes to deepen our sense of responsibility, to kindle longings after purity and progress, to intensify our Christian interest in the welfare of those about us, and of the world at large, all tends to promote the spirit of worship. How will such feelings get an outlet but in worship? The very cherishing of them, the consciousness of them, is of the essence of worship; they are the living soul of which the forms of worship are the body. We utterly deny, therefore, that there is any essential contrariety, and we maintain that there is

the closest connexion between preaching of the right sort and worship. At the same time, we believe that there is commonly too little regard had to this connexion, too little endeavour to make preaching conduce to the formation and development of a spirit of worship, and to stir up and exercise the spirit thus developed in the devotional exercises which we have.

The truth is, that the whole prevalent theory of public worship, not in Scotland or the Presbyterian Church alone, but throughout Christendom generally, is narrowed by tradition and formality, and stands in need of rekindling and expansion. The true ideal of united worship is for the most part buried. People go to church and chapel alike with hardly an attempt to enter into the spirit of *common* worship—that is, to stir up a Christian and brotherly feeling to all their fellow-worshippers, and embrace them along with themselves in their thanksgivings, confessions, and supplications. The grand Scriptural conception of public worship was presented when the tribes of Israel assembled for their festivals at Jerusalem. A man's individuality was all but lost in the great public spirit of these occasions—in the sense of the vast brotherhood with which he united in his devotional services, every member of it having a brotherly interest in him, while he had a brotherly interest in every one of them. How vastly would it enlarge our hearts to feel thus with the congregation with whom we worship! Instead of merely bearing in mind our individual sins or mercies, burdens or temptations, to open our hearts wide enough for all our fellow-worshippers, so far as we know or can fancy their circumstances, and to go before God with our arms round them, as it were, and our hearts full of them. What glorious enlargement in public worship would

this not give us! How much more acceptable a service should we in this way offer to God! How much more of the sweet influence of his presence should we feel, and what a vindication should we have of our assemblies for public worship, associated as they would be directly, and in the highest sense, with glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will to men!

The parts of public service which have now to be considered in detail are three—1st, The selection of psalms or hymns for public singing; 2d, The selection of portions of Scripture for public reading; and, 3d, The offering up of the common prayer of the congregation.

I. If three or four portions are to be sung during a meeting for public worship, the first is most suitably a direct invocation of God, to be sung as an act of homage, and an expression of longing desire and trust, of humility, faith, and love; the last is selected to follow up the discourse; and the intermediate piece or pieces may either be adapted to the prayers, or to the portions of Scripture that have preceded, or to the discourse that is to follow. The practice, still kept up in Scotland, though not usually elsewhere, of reading out in full the words of the psalm or hymn to be sung, which seems to have come down from times when psalm-books and hymn-books were less common, gives to the officiating minister the opportunity of associating it with the proper expression of feeling, and may help to bring the hearts of the people into tune with what their voices are to sing. In a congregation just assembled, or hardly assembled (as unhappily is too often the case when worship begins), there is a vast amount of dispersed, or rather ungathered

feeling—minds not concentrated on the act of worship, not at all in accord with the service to be begun. Anything that the officiating minister can do at the beginning to bring the hearts of the people up to the right starting-point, is of real value. The devout but unaffected reading of the verses, as expressing emotions which *he* feels, and which *they* ought to feel, is at least a contribution, though a small one, towards this end; and at prayer-meetings, where there is less formality, a few simple words indicating the character of the feeling expressed, and calling on the people to endeavour to stir it up, may have a favourable effect. Certainly there is something particularly delightful and encouraging when from the very first the singing denotes a *worshipping* people—when it is a genuine burst of feeling, gathering together even the hearts that are least united, and warming in some sense those which are most cold. And very much will depend on the example set by the minister himself. It is not right for him to give out such words as these :—

> "O thou my soul, bless God the Lord;
> And all that in me is
> Be stirred up His holy name
> To magnify and bless,"

and then fling off the business on the people, as if it were no concern of his. And it will be found that the minister who joins most heartily in the opening psalm is in the best spirit for the opening prayer.

For all that concerns the most direct and immediate fellowship which the soul can hold with God, the Psalms are unapproached and unapproachable; and it will be a degenerate day in the spiritual life of our country that sees them pass into disuse as materials for praise. With hardly an exception, the Christian

church now joins hymns and spiritual songs with psalms in public worship; and in order that a pure taste and a pure theology may be combined in those selected for this purpose, it is of no small importance, for those especially whose taste lies in this direction, to cultivate an acquaintance with lyrical poetry generally, and especially with religious lyrics. It is a very charming study; extremely refreshing in hours of weariness; touching up the dreary places of life with the gold of heaven; giving waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. Besides, it is by comparison that the peculiar power and beauty of lyrical poetry comes to be known, and the songs that are best adapted to foster a truly Christian spirit are recognised. A false taste in hymns is unfortunately too prevalent; and it rests mainly with Christian ministers and influential Christian laymen whose taste is cultivated, to correct and improve it.

In these days when *psalmody* rightly occupies so prominent a place among the things that we desire to improve, and when there is such scope for improvement in psalmody, such masses of improveable material in our congregations, it is a great advantage for a minister to be able to take part personally in this matter. For wherever he possesses the great spiritual influence that he ought to have, it will be found that no important movement thrives so well when he stands aloof, as when he gives it his personal countenance and aid. And nothing is more valuable than his personal influence in this matter, in order to prevent the more *æsthetic* element from becoming too prominent, and from pushing the more *spiritual* element aside. In an ordinary congregation there are usually some persons interested in the psalmody, whose regard

for the musical element preponderates; while there are others whose sympathy is almost exclusively with the spiritual. A certain measure of antagonism is liable to arise between them, and there is often a difficulty in bringing them together. It lies with the minister and office-bearers to supply the uniting medium, by trying to get the musical element to become the handmaid of the *spiritual*, and the spiritual to give life, consecration, and elevation to the musical.

There are few matters connected with public worship, on which there is more need for enlightening our congregations than the true purpose of music in devotion. If the question were asked of any congregation,—Why, or for what spiritual ends, musical sound has been divinely ordained as a vehicle of worship,—we should probably obtain in most cases a very bald and imperfect answer. Some would say, Because it affords opportunity to all to join; others, Because it relieves and freshens the minds of the worshippers; and others, Because man's enjoyment of music must be a reflection of God's. All so far true; yet there is a deeper reason which these answers do not touch. Musical sound is capable of being made a more powerful organ both of expression and of impression than plain sound. It has a faculty of *expressing* thought and feeling. We see this in the case of all great singers. It is the depth or the tenderness, or the sublimity, or the wildness, or the sweetness of the feeling they express, that is the highest quality of their singing. Of this kind too, devotional singing ought surely to be. But inasmuch as devotional emotions are so much more intense than most other emotions, the degree of feeling expressed in devotional singing ought to be correspondingly greater. Ought it not then to be an object of ministers in superintending

singing classes, to urge that the singing should be the expression, the manifest expression, of feeling? Professional teachers of psalmody are too little in the way of attending to this. When the singing does express feeling powerfully, there comes into operation the other power of good music, that of aiding *impression*. The act of singing reacts on the singer; his soul is moved, his whole being penetrated with emotion; a thrill passes through him. Still more is this reaction produced in the case of a great body of devotional singers; a glow is diffused throughout them, the feeling is produced of being at the gate of heaven.

We seem however to be but beginning to apprehend the full use of which this part of divine service is capable. The next generation is more likely to enter into this view, if the rising race of ministers will strive to instruct and guide them towards it. Imagination can hardly set bounds to the spiritual gain that would come to congregations, if the singing could be brought up to its proper level—if every psalm and hymn were a real cardiphonia, the appropriate utterance of the heart, and if the utterance were so rich and full that the feelings of the worshippers would kindle into holy fervour, and sweep and circle up to heaven like a cloud of incense.

The use of music in worship is so apt to be abused that care must ever be taken to make it and keep it the handmaid of true spiritual devotion. But where this is done, a considerably larger amount of time may profitably be set apart for singing in our public services. Specially attractive and interesting to the young, the service of lively song breaks the monotony otherwise so apt to be felt, while it is peculiarly suitable for the expression and development of that joyous hearty spirit

in which the praises of a public assembly ought to rise to God.

II. For regulating the selection of portions of Scripture for public reading the principles applicable will naturally occur to every one. Two considerations, of a general nature, may influence the selection, according as the aim is to help the devotional, or the didactic part of the service. Where the object is devotional, the psalms present themselves as the ready and incomparable means of accomplishing the end. And indeed it is a general conviction that great and manifold use should be made of the psalms. It is one of the excellencies of the service of the Church of England, that it fulfils this important condition. The method so common among us of singing the psalms in little bits certainly does not enable us to get the full benefit of that many-stringed harp of David, with its wonderful richness and variety of feeling, sweeping over the whole field of religious experience. Very often, therefore, the psalms ought to be resorted to for part at least of the public readings.

The art of reading the Scriptures well is one greatly to be coveted. To some the gift is given in a wonderful degree; their reading is like the perfection of music The voice—easy, flexible, musical, adapting itself so readily to every shade of feeling: the subdued solemn tone, as if in speaking God's words one dared not let one's-self fully out; the under-current of earnest feeling that shows itself by no boisterous eruption, but by the subdued spirit which seeks to be silent before God,—may well be ranked among the "best gifts" which the apostle has told us to covet earnestly. For the attainment of such a power there is needed a marvellous combination of mechanical skill and spiritual feeling.

III. We come now to public prayer. In adverting to this part of public worship it were difficult to find a better starting-point than the definition in the Catechism—"Prayer is the offering up of our desires unto God." Let this be kept in mind, in public and in private prayer, and almost without further direction it will guide to a right view of the mode of performing the exercise. Prayer is a transaction *with God*,—as really, though not as palpably, as Abraham's intercession for the men of Sodom was a transaction with God, or Jacob's night of wrestling at Peniel. Let the minister feel himself face to face with God, speaking no word, expressing no feeling, harbouring no imagination from which he would recoil if he stood before the throne, and saw the Mighty One in visible form bending his ear. Prayer is the offering up of *the desires of the heart.* It is a presenting to God of certain spiritual offerings —the desires of the heart. Therefore it is neither a devout meditation, nor a sacred disquisition. If it be not an offering up of desires, it is not prayer. There are prayers, so called, which in reality are little dissertations, or "preaching-prayers," but they do not offer up the desires of the heart. There are what we may call historical prayers, where the minister gives God an elaborate narrative of something, introducing each clause with the words, "Thou knowest," as much as to say—if only the man himself would act on it—there is no need for our telling thee. Public prayer is no prayer unless it represent and express the desires of the heart.[1]

[1] The following enumeration of this class of prayers has been given by an American writer :—"(1.) *Doctrinal* prayers, or prayers designed to inculcate certain doctrines which are regarded by the speaker as essential or important. (2.) *Historical* prayers, in which are compressed long narratives for the information of persons not acquainted with the details of the facts referred to. (3.) *Hortatory*

Then "prayer is the offering up of *our* desires to God:" not of the desires of the minister as an individual—an exercise for which his closet is the appropriate place; but of the minister and flock together, of the minister as the representative of the flock, speaking with them and speaking for them. He is the head and mouth-piece, as it were, of a deputation at the throne of grace, and ought to feel that he is there as a representative, quite as much as the head of any deputation that ever went to present petition or memorial to a Prime Minister. It is his having this representative character in prayer that makes it so necessary for him to consider beforehand what his prayers are to consist of. Great individuality in public prayer, dwelling on things appropriate to his own condition, but not theirs, is an impertinence and a wrong of a serious kind. Common prayer should have as its substratum what belongs to all God's children; its starting-point man's guilt, demerit, want, and misery; its attitude, towards the Cross; and its fundamental petitions, the great evangelical gifts. Thus, even if the sermon should not

prayers, intended to stir up the zeal of the congregation in regard to some particular subject or enterprise which at the moment may be thought interesting. (4.) *Denunciatory* prayers, designed to warn the audience against certain errors or practices, to put down certain sentiments, or to awaken towards them indignant feelings; being appeals to men, not addresses to God. (5.) *Personal* prayers, which spring from a desire to administer a secret rebuke, or to bestow condemnation, some individual being expressly in the mind of the person praying. (6.) *Eloquent* prayers, in which there is a display of a brilliant fancy, and of polished and elegant language, compelling the hearer to say, 'What a fine prayer that was!' (7.) *Familiar* prayer, in which there is an evident absence of that sacred awe and reverence which should fill the mind in every approach to God. (8.) *Sectarian* prayers, indicating very clearly an attachment to a particular sect among the multitude of Christian denominations. (9.) *Long* prayers, which weary and exhaust the spirit of devotion."

be on a topic leading the preacher to expound the scheme of salvation, the prayers by their very structure, though not in formal words, would indicate the way—since the consciously lost sinner, in the person of the minister, would be seen looking up to the Cross, and rejoicing in the grace which guides to heaven.

In prayer, as in preaching, a very close bond is formed between the minister and his people, when he enters sympathetically into their circumstances, and, at the throne of grace, shows that he is mindful of the very temptations, wants, difficulties, and perplexities of which they feel the pressure every day. Living as the minister does, and ought to do, out of the world, out of the sphere at all events where the world's most characteristic spirit reigns, it is not easy for him to know the real obstructions to a godly life, without and within, to which the mass of people are exposed. That which is peculiar to the spiritual life he may and ought to know better than any; but the action of the ordinary conditions of the outer life upon the inner he must take some trouble to discover. When his prayers show an acquaintance both with the outward and the inward obstructions, and grace is sought suitable to this state of things, the drawing together of hearts is very wonderful. It is a good sign, both of minister and people, when he is much prized for his prayers—when the people feel that his words express all their hearts, and that in his company they are borne up close to the very footstool of the throne.

But if in public prayer the minister sustains this representative character, and is bound to take the godly part of his flock along with him to the throne of grace, the absence of all premeditation or preparation for public prayer must necessarily lead, as Dr. C. J.

Brown has remarked, to one or other of two evils: "either he must slide gradually into a form of his own, a repetition of substantially the same things Sabbath after Sabbath (to which would not a good liturgy be preferable?), or else, in trying to avoid this, he must wander up and down, as some ship at sea, without compass or rudder, at the mercy of every wind that blows." It is to avoid both these evils that premeditation is so necessary to the right discharge of this duty.

Three points require special attention in connexion with public prayer:—1. The topics or substance. 2. The language or style. 3. The tone and utterance.

1. Ever since the days of Origen, who wrote the first treatise on prayer (De Oratione), four divisions have usually been specified—Adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication. All public prayers must embrace more or less of these several divisions. But obviously no single prayer can include more than a few fragments of each. For a minister to attempt on a single occasion to go round the whole and embrace everything is utterly out of the question. It is one of the points on which premeditation must be exercised—what topics are to be selected for each occasion, and how are they to be distributed so that within a suitable period all may be included? While a certain character of unity will mark the public prayers of every thoughtful minister, there will at the same time be an ample field for variety. The same great subjects of thanksgiving, confession, and supplication ever occurring; the details connected with each varying from time to time. In fact it is one of the points in which a holy skill requires to be exercised, to combine brevity, unity, and definiteness. In Foster's remarks on Robert Hall's Character as a Preacher, he adverts to a failure in

this respect by which the great orator was characterized.[1] While the devotional spirit was admirable,—"the greatest seriousness and simplicity, the plainest character of genuine piety, humble and prostrate before the Almighty"—there was often in the petitions a vagueness and want of unity, a kind of random combination not to have been looked for in so great a preacher. "Prayers," says Mr. Foster very justly, "which do not detain the thoughts on any certain things in particular, take very slight hold of the auditors."

2. Language or style. Instinctively, every devout heart will express itself in prayer in simple language. Figures of speech in prayer, except they be so simple as to have lost the semblance of figures, are utterly out of the question. Elaborate rhetorical periods are simply an abomination. What are described as "eloquent prayers" must ever be regarded with suspicion. An eloquent prayer is calculated to raise the question, Was it designed for the ear of God or for the ear of man? The reporter of an American newspaper revealed more than he probably intended when he described a prayer offered on one occasion by Mr. Edward Everett, the celebrated Unitarian orator, as "the most eloquent prayer that was ever addressed to a Boston audience."

While artificial rhetoric is ever to be shunned, a certain neatness and conciseness of style is highly suitable. All uncouthness, flabbiness, clumsiness, is especially disagreeable in prayer, and no doubt it is the frequent occurrence of such things that affords ground for objection to extempore public prayer. Attention at the beginning of his course to neatness of expression in the language of prayer will be of the greatest

[1] Hall's *Works*, i. 207.

service to the young preacher. By and by his ordinary language will assume somewhat of the point, precision, and finish of a liturgy.

The copious use of Scriptural expressions in prayer is of the most essential importance. The remark of Addison has often been quoted on this subject, although it is not very profound or exhaustive :—"There is a certain coldness," he says, "in the phrases of European languages, compared with the oriental form of speech. The English tongue has received innumerable improvements from an infusion of Hebraisms, derived out of the practical passages in Holy Writ. They warm and animate our language, give it force and energy, and convey our thoughts in ardent and intense phrases. There is something in this kind of diction that often sets the mind in a flame, and makes our hearts burn within us. How cold and dead is a prayer composed in the most elegant form of speech, when it is not heightened by that solemnity of phrase which may be drawn from the sacred writings."

The use of the Lord's Prayer in our Scottish service, provided it be not carelessly rhymed over, but uttered devoutly and thoughtfully, is to many devout minds a great comfort. Preachers can hardly understand with what delight some of their people welcome that part of the service where they are led in prayer, not in the words of man but in the words of the blessed Lord himself. It is not merely that in every petition of the Lord's Prayer there is such infinite depth and fulness, but the language is such a model of clearness, directness, and simplicity. It were well if the Lord's Prayer were taken as a model for all prayer more than it is. The other prayers of Scripture are constructed on the same principle. Those of St. Paul are wonder-

ful examples of brevity and richness, and are usually constructed with a fine musical cadence. It is no wonder if those whose ear is accustomed to such prayers are offended by the loose, rambling, flabby performances they sometimes hear. There is a language suitable for prayer equally removed from the grandiloquence of the rhetorician and from the careless clumsiness of the impromptu orator. David or rather Moses began it, and John, who quotes Moses in the Apocalypse, crowned it. Nothing higher or better ever has been or ever can be achieved.

To train himself to make skilful and neat use of suitable passages of Scripture in prayer is one of the most indispensable exercises of the young preacher. To achieve this power ought to be one of his most earnest endeavours; for not to be able to throw his petitions into the language of the Holy Spirit is to fail in one of the most important means of edification which a Christian congregation can enjoy.

3. The tone and utterance.—One rule, well observed, will make all other rules superfluous—let prayer be uttered as in the very presence of God—poured into his ear as from a miserable sinner who deserves his wrath, but to whom for Christ's sake He extends his infinite mercy. In prayer so uttered there will always be an undertone of felt unworthiness, the voice will have a touch of contrition, while a plaintive, fervent tone of entreaty will characterize the prayer throughout. The absence of this tone raises a great objection to many extempore prayers, and no other qualities can make up for such a want. The prayer of one who does not seem to feel that he is in God's presence, or who, if he does, shows none of that subdued air which is so appropriate to sinners standing before God, must be felt to have a

vital want. How can we expect to conduct our people into God's presence if we do not enter it ourselves, or to lead them to stand in awe before Him, if our own air is that of self-satisfied indifference?

The undertone of contrition need not hinder the right expression of that gladness and serene satisfaction which the experience of God's grace is fitted to bring. Our confidence indeed will be all the greater, that we can draw the line so clearly between our deserts and God's infinite grace—can say, "Thou wast angry with us, but thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest us."

It may be useful, with equal brevity, to advert to some of the most common faults in public prayer.

One of these is excessive length. Nothing is more clearly shown by experience than the impossibility of continuing to join heartily in very long prayers. For people to throw themselves heartily into the current of another man's devotions involves a great mental effort, and in proportion to the greatness of the effort is their liability to fatigue. It is quite certain that attention cannot be given beyond a certain point, and when attention fails, devotion ends. Whitefield is said to have remarked to an excellent minister, whose prayer was unreasonably long, "You prayed me into a good frame, and you prayed me out of it." A minister is not, of course, to have regard to the outcry of every worldly-minded person who sighs for short prayers, short sermons, short services, and, as some one proposed to add, short religion in general. But if it be the case that from five to ten minutes is the longest period during which the average Christianity of a congregation can join in prayer, let him accommodate himself to their capacity, and if more time for prayer should be

deemed necessary, let him rather increase the number of prayers, than lengthen out any to an undue degree. It is to be observed that long prayers are not the usual characteristic of a very vital condition of Christianity, but rather of a time when formal services are substituted for true spiritual worship.

Another evil to be avoided is inaccurate quotation. We mean, of course, quotation from Scripture, for hardly any other quotation is endurable in public prayer. How many erroneous quotations, as from Scripture, have become stereotyped, and are reproduced by minister after minister taking them up thoughtlessly from some one whom he has been in the habit of hearing, would be almost incredible, if the facts were not very clear. Dr. Brown has called attention to the extraordinary physical attitude in which the minister sometimes proposes to place himself and his people by a blending of no fewer than four several passages: "We would put our hand on our mouth, and our mouth in the dust, and cry out, Unclean, unclean! God be merciful to us sinners." Often we hear it said, "There is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared, and plenteous redemption *that thou mayest be sought unto*"—these last words being an unwarranted addition. So it is often said, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and canst not look on sin *without abhorrence*," the last two words, which are meant to strengthen, really serving to dilute and weaken the sense. God is called "the hearer *and answerer* of prayer;" "The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of *horrid* cruelty;" and where two or three are met together, God is asked to be "in the midst of them, *to bless them and to do them good*," as if God could bless them without doing them good.

Expletives, repetitions, and redundancies, are blemishes in prayer. It weakens the force of real prayer constantly to insert the words "we beseech thee"—words, we may remark, which are not often uttered in a beseeching tone. Nor is it seemly to be throwing in Oh's and Ah's at all points: they have an artificial look, if they are not really artificial; and it is far better that the earnestness of the heart should show itself by the deep soul-fervour of the tones, than by words which are certainly an offence to many, and probably an advantage to none.

The Catechism gives another instruction, admirably adapted to public as well as private prayer, when it exhorts us "to draw near to God with all holy reverence and confidence, as children to a father." To *draw near:* to be intimate, close, fearless, as is the privilege of children; yet reverential, as in presence of the Infinite, before whom the seraphim cover their faces with their wings. Let our dealings with God be direct and simple, and such as to invite the co-operation of our people, and almost constrain them to utter their responsive "Amen." Let the voice be equally removed from the cold tone of indifference, and the sharp notes of excitement; let our tone be neither an affected whine nor a thundering roar; but the humble, plaintive tone of earnest appeal, in which the sense of unworthiness and our confidence in God's grace blend in a kind of heavenly music. The strength of prayer is not in the earthquake, nor in the thunder, but in the still small voice. "In quietness, and in confidence shall be your strength."

Nor must we forget that to qualify us for prayer in public, we need much experience of it in secret. The preparation of our own spirit, the exciting of earnest

thoughts and feelings there, the appeal, "Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south," are indispensable to the right discharge of this duty. How can one be a leader in anything, if one is not even a doer? How can one lead the devotions of a congregation, if one has no devotion of one's own?

CHAPTER XV.

PASTORAL VISITATION.

HITHERTO, we have considered the Christian minister mainly as a preacher, a public teacher, addressing his people from the pulpit, or leading their devotions when they are assembled to worship God. It must be remembered, however, that ordinarily the minister is a pastor as well as a preacher. He is called to deal with individual souls, as well as to proclaim to an assembled congregation the message of the Gospel. Between these two functions of the ministry, there need be no opposition, though sometimes the impression prevails that diligence in the one is incompatible with success in the other. The fact however is, that where this has seemed to be the case, it has generally been due to the fact of the minister giving himself too exclusively to that department of work for which he has the greatest aptitude and inclination. Some ministers have a natural liking for society; it is pleasant for them to be with their fellows, conversation is their element, they like to move about among their people; and owing to this inclination, they are led to devote to this branch of duty a disproportionate amount of time, and to leave too little for pulpit preparation. To others, again, owing to difference of temperament, it is difficult

and irksome to pay visits; conversation with uncongenial minds is a toil that oppresses them; the communication of thought and feeling by that channel is always consciously feeble, if not consciously a failure; it suits them better to address large numbers of persons; for that they can summon up and concentrate their powers of thought and feeling; consequently their temptation is to neglect the duties of the pastorate, and confine themselves to those of the pulpit.

But in point of fact, there is no real antagonism between the pastorate and the pulpit, nor does it appear a very impracticable achievement that the one should be made the useful, happy handmaid of the other. The pastoral duty of the minister may easily be made a most valuable auxiliary to his pulpit work, and the pulpit duty, rightly performed, will seek its natural outlet and application in the pastoral. It is only by personal intercourse with his people that the minister can gain a true knowledge of them, their errors, sins, temptations, difficulties, the kind of guidance which they need, and the style of preaching that comes home to them and helps them. It is only by this means, too, that he can thoroughly learn the effect of his preaching, —who are awakened, who are perplexed, who are at rest. Often, in pastoral visiting, he will have texts and topics suggested to him, on which his preaching will have a life-like earnestness and power; nay, like Paul at Athens, he will sometimes have his spirit stirred within him, and feel God's Word working like a fire in his bosom, which will not endure to be restrained. On the other hand, when the preacher is earnest in his pulpit; when looking round, he sees unwonted interest expressed in this face or in that, some young person evidently arrested, and beginning to look wistfully to-

wards the gate of the kingdom of heaven, or some care-worn countenance relaxing under the dawn of Christian hope, it is impossible not to desire to watch the change at a nearer point, and endeavour to be more immediately helpful to those who seem as if they would enter into the kingdom, if only some one would take them by the hand.

The pastoral functions of the Christian minister are not only fully recognised in Scripture, but are placed in a light at once interesting and beautiful. The emblems which shadow it forth are those which are most expressive of a relation of great affection; such as a nurse, a shepherd, a physician, a father. "We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children; so being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the Gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us" (1 Thess. ii. 7, 8). The model of the faithful and affectionate pastor is presented to us by God in his own person—"I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment" (Ezek. xxxiv. 16). In the New Testament the same figure recurs, applied by Christ, the good Shepherd, to denote the relation between him and his flock: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me;" "but a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him, for they know not the voice of strangers" (John x. 27 and 5). In Paul the Apostle, we have the model at once of the great preacher and the affectionate and painstaking pastor. He could remind the Ephesian elders how he had taught them not only "publicly," but "from house to house" (Acts xx. 20), and in writing to the Church

of Rome, he fills a whole chapter with personal messages, showing not only his interest in individuals, but his acquaintance with the spiritual history of each (Rom. xvi.). If we seek in modern times for an instance of a great preacher moulded after the same type, we find it in our own Chalmers, so incomparable in the pulpit, and yet the founder of territorial missions, the reviver, in a great degree, of the parochial organization, and the unwearied searcher out of the lost and fallen.

The practice of pastoral intercourse between a minister and his people has received the strongest commendations from the earliest to the latest times. Ignatius, in his epistle to Polycarp, urges his friend to be the protector and friend of the widows; not to despise male or female slaves; to speak to the sisters, exhorting them to love the Lord and to be satisfied with their husbands both in flesh and spirit; in like manner to exhort the brothers to love their wives; and to seek after all *by name*.[1] Archbishop Leighton in his last retirement remarked—"Had I again to be a parish minister, I must follow sinners to their homes and even to their alehouse." Dr. Doddridge said that his heart did not upbraid him with having kept back anything that might be profitable to his people, but he feared that he had not followed them sufficiently with domestic and personal exhortations.[2] There are few earnest men who, on a review of their ministry from the close of life, will not in some degree share this feeling. Archbishop Whately begins his lectures to "The Parish Pastor" by strenuously urging the diligent and unwearied performance of this branch of duty.

Even in the lowest point of view, the advantages to

[1] *Epist. to Polycarp*, ch. iv. v.
[2] See Bridges's *Christian Ministry*, Part v.

a minister of a personal acquaintance with the flock to whom he preaches, are remarkably great. It is in every way a benefit to the shepherd to know his sheep, and to call them each by name. A subtle but powerful sympathy is established between them, especially in the case of the young, and the less educated classes. No one can well estimate the benefit which a young person derives, in a religious point of view, from personal friendly acquaintance with his minister, if the minister be not only a good but a friendly man. A young man who has no religious parents, no religious associates, and no personal acquaintance with a Christian minister, is extremely apt to fall under the impression that religion is a matter with which personally he has little or nothing to do. But should a minister know him, show an interest in him, speak to him seriously but kindly, and urge on him his personal responsibility in regard to the Gospel, he is far more likely to respond to his appeals. The subtlest and strongest human bond that draws the feelings of men is that of sympathy. Now, friendly knowledge of a person, the habit of speaking to him and inquiring for his welfare when you meet, or of calling at his house with a friendly purpose, is a contribution, though not a very large one, towards the establishment of sympathy. So long as you labour to do good from the pulpit among those whom you do not know, you labour under the manifest disadvantage of having little or no hold, at least no necessary hold, on their sympathies. Get acquainted with them, and interested in them,—where there was before a drawback, there comes to be a conspiring force in your favour.

We are not therefore to set down the craving which some worthy people have for frequent visits from their minister, as wholly unreasonable and without founda-

tion. No doubt, there are cases in which it arises from a low motive, from the love of attention, from a poor desire to be made much of; but on the other hand, it may be the expression of that craving for sympathy and personal interest which makes the relation between minister and people so much more pleasant and so much more profitable. If, therefore, in the course of visitation, you can do no more than get into personal sympathy with your people, an important end is gained, provided the time you spend together is not spent in a quite frivolous way. But this is very far from the only benefit that pastoral visitation may confer. If it can be made subservient to spiritual acquaintance, if by means of it, whether directly or indirectly, the pastor can learn what is passing in the hearts of his people, and adapt his instruction accordingly, its benefits will plainly be of a far higher kind.

We have no hesitation, therefore, in pressing upon you, when you are settled as ministers of congregations, and especially if they be small charges in the country, to give its due place to pastoral visiting. If, in the course of time, you are translated to large towns, or called to minister to large flocks, and are compelled to engage in a large amount of miscellaneous work, your duty in pastoral visitation may not be so pressing. But in other circumstances it is quite necessary. And in order that you may do it effectually and thoroughly, the first requisite is that you do it *systematically.*

There are two kinds of pastoral visits to be kept in view, namely, the regular visitation of the whole families and adherents of a congregation or a territory; and the visitation of the sick and afflicted. For each of these purposes it is desirable to have an allotted time, but especially for the first—the visitation of families.

The other cases will in a sense assert their own claims; but without a fixed time set apart for it, the general visitation, as it may be called, is apt to be neglected. It is surely not too much to devote to this purpose the chief part of at least one day in the week. If so, let it be the same day. It is an advantage to the minister, and an advantage to the people, when it is known that one particular day is devoted by him to this purpose. To facilitate the work as much as possible, let a plan of visitation be constructed, indicating the order in which the people are to be taken, and the time in which it may be expected that the work will be completed, leaving a margin for possible interruptions. Let the minister be careful to have full lists of the people, containing the names, residences, and employments of all, and the ages of the young. He will find it too very desirable to keep a *record* of his visits. If he trust his memory to recall in future years the topics on which he addressed them on former occasions, he will probably find that he has been leaning on a broken reed. Such a record will become a most valuable document, as a reminiscence of his work, and will greatly help the pastor in planning his visits after a few years have elapsed, when some fresh difficulties are apt to present themselves.

We are the more earnest in insisting on the systematic prosecution of the work of visitation, because many country charges are small, and in the case of these the necessity of system is less obvious, but not less real, than where the flock is large. In fact, it is one of the greatest snares of a small charge, and one that demands to be guarded against with extraordinary vigilance, that, being small, it seems as if there were no need for system in the working of it. There are cer-

tain apparent anomalies in life and habit that must be taken into account in connexion with such matters. The philosopher could say that he was never less idle than when at leisure, nor less lonely than when alone. In like manner it may be said of some men, that they never do things so successfully as when they are busy, and that they never do them so ill as when they have little to do. There is something in the mental stimulus, the fillip given to the whole energies by abundant occupation, that causes everything that is undertaken by busy energetic men to be done with vigour, if they are not absolutely crushed by their labours; and on the other hand, there is something in the unconcentrated, unknit-up condition of a mind having little to do, that often causes that little to be done ill. Who has not felt in holiday time, when he was visiting a friend in the country, or spending his time in rambles or pic-nic tours, that it was an effort to write a single letter, whereas in his ordinary working mood he might throw off a dozen letters, and do four times as much other work without any irksome feeling? This indicates the danger men incur of turning lazy, mentally as well as physically, in small charges. System is needed in its own way in the small as well as in the large; the two talents are to be diligently improved as well as the five; and the rule of the kingdom is, "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much" (Luke xvi. 10): "Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not, shall be taken even that which he hath" (Matt. xxv. 29).

There is another great recommendation of system. It has a wonderful effect in reconciling one to what at first is irksome, and even causing one to do it with pleasure. If the work of visitation be naturally irk-

some, and no systematic method of prosecuting it be adopted, each time that it is attempted the sense of irksomeness will be renewed. But if a system be adopted, and conscientiously followed, it will be otherwise. The preliminary struggle with inclination will hardly be felt. This is the advantage of making up your mind to anything naturally disagreeable. You have settled that the thing must be, and inclination, as if it were a sentient being, seems to shrink from a contest in which defeat is inevitable; so, when you work faithfully upon a plan, the fact that it is a settled plan seems to scatter your enemies. And this is not all. "There is no fact," says Dr. Shedd, "in the Christian experience better established than that the faithful performance of labour, from conscience, ends in its being performed with relish and pleasure. Conscience is finally wrought into the will in a vital synthesis. Law in the end becomes an impulse instead of a commandment."[1]

A few observations may now be offered on the practical following out of pastoral visitation in both its forms.

1. And first, of the regular visitation of families. How this can be best accomplished in all cases it hardly becomes any one man to attempt to determine.

It is one of the points on which every minister must become wise through his own experience and the teaching of God's Spirit, and on which brethren who are accustomed to speak often one to another, will advantageously exchange thoughts and experience when they have been for some time engaged in the work.

If notice has been given of the minister's intention to visit at a certain hour, it is evident that something

[1] *Pastoral Theology*, p. 393.

more than a mere visit of friendship or courtesy will be looked for. The minister, it will be felt, has come for the purpose of promoting the spiritual and eternal welfare of the family, and therefore the sooner he addresses himself to his errand the better. Some ministers are willing to prolong the preliminary conversation, in the hope that they will be able, after a time, to lead off the minds of the family to more serious thoughts, by building on something that comes up casually. And no doubt, if one has skill enough, this is the best method, provided the members of the family are not struck with silence the moment one touches what is serious, but are willing to continue the conversation. For, as Archbishop Whately remarks, the true idea of pastoral intercourse implies that the pastor is "not merely to speak, but to listen, and to encourage his people to open their minds freely to him, and that too, not on their spiritual concerns only, but on any others also on which they naturally and allowably feel much interest, and have a craving for sympathy."[1] But when once he gets into the current of temporal things, there is a great risk of his being so carried along, that it is only by an abrupt and awkward jerk that he can cross over to the spiritual region; and in that case whatever he may say or do is apt to be set down as a mere homage to professional propriety, —not the spontaneous outcome of a heart charged with its message. To avoid this risk it is often desirable for the minister, after a brief salutation and kindly inquiry after the welfare of the household, to proceed at once, like Abraham's servant at Padan-aram, to tell his errand, to do what he has come to do. In speaking to the household he may find a point of departure by

[1] *The Parish Pastor*, p. 9.

saying why he has come, adverting to the exceeding solemnity of spiritual things, and to the importance not of a mere general, but of a special application of what is said from the pulpit, so that no one may suffer the appeal to go past him, or think he does right while he fails to receive the message of God. Something may be said applicable to the circumstances of the different portions of the family,—the heads, the children, older and younger, the servants when there are such. Of the children questions may be asked, and are probably expected to be asked; but let the minister avoid countenancing the impression which some foolish parents are prone to encourage when they terrify their children with the minister's visit, and tell them how he will pour out his wrath on them if they cannot correctly repeat the catechism.

It will not be amiss too to bear in mind that very often there is a tendency on the part of people to think of ministers as beings awfully solemn, with but little of human sympathy, men to be dreaded as stern reprovers, instead of respected and loved as affectionate and sympathetic guides. In pastoral visitation, therefore, let there be shown a frankness, a cordiality, a humility of spirit, a winning brotherly-kindness that shall dissipate such an impression and tend to gain the confidence of all.

All pastors will admit that to draw out the members of a family into frank conversation on religious subjects is one of the most difficult and rare achievements. It is so difficult that most give it up in despair. It is not mere earnestness that succeeds here. There is needed much tact and knowledge of the human heart, especially of what on the one hand sends it shrinking into its shell, and of what on the other draws it out, like a

flower opening to the sun. Among those things which are most useful in drawing men out, the records of other men's struggles and experiences have an important place. Suppose you speak on the duty of the devout daily reading of the Scriptures, you may get no response. But suppose you speak of Luther, and his best hours given to reading and prayer, or of John Knox reading the whole psalter once every month, and a daily portion of the Bible besides, you introduce a medium which makes conversation easier. It is a sort of thread round which conversation may crystallize. For myself, let me say, if I were now beginning a ministry, I should feel it of immense value to store my memory with facts derived from Christian biography, and similar sources, to be used from time to time in promoting pastoral conversation, and making it at once profitable and easy.

It must be owned, at the same time, that there is sometimes a crass stolidity about the people whom a pastor visits, on which it is impossible to make an impression. While some families exert themselves to meet their minister half-way, and make it both easy and pleasant for him to deal with them in his pastoral capacity, others are singularly apathetic and chilling, responding in heartless monosyllables to his efforts to engage them in conversation, as if it were their very object to keep him as far from their hearts as possible. If people generally knew something of the minister's difficulties in pastoral visitation, they would think more how they might practically help to remove them.

It may be remarked here in passing, that the art of conversation, and social intercourse at large, is one in which students generally are defective. They are so accustomed to conversation in their own circle alone,

that when they are thrown into social contact with others, they find nothing in common, and therefore no materials for conversation. The art of social intercourse is one of the most important parts of unconventional education, being the art of getting into contact with minds unlike our own, and forming a bond that shall dispose them to look more favourably upon our views of spiritual things.

To return to pastoral visitation. Indispensable though we hold this practice to be in small congregations, and desirable, where practicable, in large, it is obviously to be regarded at the same time as a duty inferior to that of the pulpit, and not to be allowed to interfere with its efficiency. Some preachers of great mark and efficiency have deliberately, and from a deep sense of duty, abstained from undertaking much work of this kind. Among these was President Edwards. His reason for not engaging in it was, not that he did not feel its importance, but that he deemed himself unqualified for it, and considered that his time was spent to greater advantage in his study, to which he usually gave twelve hours a day.[1] A preacher of a very different type, the late Mr. Jay of Bath, in like manner restricted his pastoral visitation within much narrower limits than was agreeable to his flock. In his autobiography, Mr. Jay, without wholly justifying himself, says that to some extent this omission was voluntary, as he thought that much more was expected of him than was reasonable, and that it was *consequence* rather than *improvement* that was affected by disappointment. He says that he deliberately abstained from following the example of *three* classes of pastoral visitors. "1. The *smokers*, or smoking ministers, who

[1] Dwight's *Life of Edwards.*

were furnished with a pretty pipe, and its usual concomitant at every house of call : [thereby setting their people the example of an act of self-indulgence, which is certainly not the spirit that the minister of Christ is called to foster]. 2. The listless, who like to lounge about people's houses, rather than bind themselves down to diligent study. 3. The truly pious, who wished to do good, but were often less useful than they wished or imagined. Many of these have not the oily slang of religious phrases; they are not apt at free and appropriate address, or turning all incidents to profitable account; yet they might preach to advantage had they time and leisure for reading and meditation."[1] Mr. Jay saw likewise that the visits of ministers were not always convenient, and therefore not always acceptable. As to set dinner and tea entertainments, his observation was, that it was almost impossible to commence or maintain discourse by which one could either gain good or do good. Social meetings he deemed useful enough for social purposes, for promoting good neighbourhood and social pleasure, but beyond that he had little faith in them.

2. The visitation of the *sick* and *afflicted* is one of the most interesting, one of the most blessed, and one of the most precious of the duties of a minister. It affords rare opportunities for the formation of most affectionate bonds—ties hallowed by the tenderest associations. He who has ever been attracted to their dwellings by the intelligence of any kind of distress or sorrow—he on whose face they have ever seen the expression of a brother's sympathy, and eagerness to help—he to whom they have always felt encouraged to tell of their sorrows and their burdens, knowing that his heart would

[1] *Autobiography of Rev. Wm. Jay*, p. 154.

be open to the doleful tale—he who has led them to the throne of grace on every occasion of distress, and sought for them the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness—he, by whose ministrations the deathbed of a dear parent or partner has been cheered, the eye of a stricken son or daughter turned to the Cross, and the chill terror of death has given place to the calm joy and confidence of faith, can never be an object of indifference to those to whom, in the darkest passages of life, he has been the instrument of so much blessing. Let a minister have an affectionate Christian heart, and be ready at all times to show his warm sympathy for those of his flock who are in trouble,—such a man will be loved by his people, and will have a degree of influence with them inexplicable to those who do not know how the burdened heart appreciates sympathy in dark and cloudy days.

But there is a snare to be guarded against in this very fact. The object of the minister in visiting the sick is not merely to express his sympathy, or to show them ordinary kindness. It is to turn the occasion into one of spiritual good. It is to show them how God is dealing with them, and to cause them to hear the voice of the rod. It is his duty to remind them of the opportunity of meditation and self-examination which the sickness affords, and to urge them to improve it in the way of considering whether their hearts have ever responded to the call of God, and whether they have been making a business of their sanctification, following peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Where the sickness seems likely to be mortal, and where there is no evidence of due preparation for death, the duty of the minister is

alike solemn and delicate. How to let the sick person know of the bodily danger, and the still greater danger of the soul—how to guide his mind during the few weeks, or it may be only days or hours of life that remain to him, so that by God's blessing the great change may be wrought—how to get other influences to conspire best with that of the minister himself in order to the securing of this glorious result, are questions of awful solemnity, only to be resolved in the spirit of most earnest prayer. What magnifies the difficulty is the terror in which relatives often stand lest anything be said fitted to agitate the sufferer; and the injunctions to the same effect of some medical advisers, who, in their anxiety for the recovery of the body, do not always think of the eternal welfare of the soul. To attain the utmost faithfulness, and yet the utmost tenderness in such a case—to leave nothing unsaid that, by God's blessing, may be of use to the soul, and nothing undone in respect of tenderness and gentleness of tone and manner that may prevent undue agitation or opposition, involves a strain upon our best and holiest energies, under which we could not but sink if we did not fall back on words like these: "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

And there is still another difficulty. It is the glorious doctrine of our religion that the door of mercy is ever open, and that the finished work of Christ is ever available for the sinner. But there is a way, sometimes, of exhibiting this glorious truth that is objectionable. The atonement of Christ is sometimes presented to the Protestant in much the same way as the crucifix is presented to the Papist. The impression is apt to be produced, either on the dying man or on his friends,

that there is in that truth a kind of talismanic virtue; that it forms a sort of "open sesame" to let one into heaven. One needs to be very careful to let it be understood that what you offer the sinner is not a charm, but a living Saviour; and that what gives value to that "looking unto Jesus" which you urge is, that spiritually the sinner becomes one with him, and being emptied of self and filled with Christ, becomes inwardly as well as formally a child of God. The utmost care must be taken not to let the impression be formed, especially on ignorant minds, that salvation turns on something like a mechanical act, something like the signing of a paper, only done with the head instead of the hand. To counteract this, the fulness and spirituality of the Christian salvation needs to be earnestly dwelt on.

It is no doubt an exceeding great privilege for a minister to be the means of saving a dying sinner from the second death, and yet his harvest work should be regarded only as beginning when the tomb has closed over the departed one. The bereaved family, for the next few weeks or months, will afford a most interesting and hopeful field for his Christian efforts; for when death enters the family circle and carries off one with whom all our lives have been intertwined, there is left on the survivors a peculiarly strong sense of desolation—the vanity of earth, the realities of eternity, the odiousness of sin, the preciousness of redemption, come home with unusual force, and the heart is peculiarly susceptible of impressions that may issue in conversion. This is just to say that the Holy Spirit is dealing with the heart; a divine Visitor is at hand: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." To try to have these impressions confirmed, so as to issue in true and final decision for

Christ—to urge a course of Christian habits, of reading and prayer, and perhaps some species of Christian work, is the natural direction of the minister's efforts and prayers after some great bereavement. For in point of fact it is commonly found, that even those who have been well brought up need the discipline of trial to bring them to decision, and that it is out of such discipline that the greater part of the piety among us actually springs.

Besides sickness and death, there are many other kinds of distress of which the Christian minister may and probably ought to take notice. Sometimes he is made the *confidant* of his people, and sorrows are poured into his ear preying upon their very vitals, all the more hard to bear because they have to be locked up in their own bosoms. Sometimes he hears a tale of domestic unfaithfulness, or of family strife; in trying to be at once tender and faithful, and not make things worse in the attempt to make them better, his tact and wisdom are taxed to the uttermost. And sometimes a revelation unsuspected and most horrible is made to him: he is told how a fatal plague-spot has shown itself in the character of the fine young man that promised to be the joy and pride of his family, and the anguish-stricken parents appeal to him for help. Possibly he has the still more terrible task of being called to comfort in a case where no comfort, but only submission, is possible—where sudden death has cut off a loved but erring one in the midst of his sins, and the desolate parents are prostrated under the burden of their very faith;—when their clear vivid view of the eternal world is like to drive them to distraction, instead of brightening their hopes. It may not be often that the Christian minister is brought into contact with

these, the most fearful tragedies of life; for happily it is not every day that one so tender-hearted as David is called to mourn for a son killed in the act of rebellion, or that the air is rent with the cry, "Would God that I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" But experience teaches us that the world is very full of disappointment. Many is the heart where that lump of lead lies at the bottom, though it may not be allowed to show itself. Many is the crushed affection, many are the withered leaves that strew life's common paths. Many is the parental disappointment, although perhaps the parent hardly remembers that at one time brighter dreams floated before his fancy, now gone for ever. Many a leafless branch waves in the cold north wind, and the time has gone past for fresh buds of hope to form, and unfold in tufts of living green. Experience of life compels us to look abroad on our people with a more tender, a more sympathetic spirit; we think how much disappointment has to do with the harsher and sterner features that disfigure their character. It were miserable if this experience did not also intensify our desires for their Christian good; if, seeing them hovering disappointed about the broken cisterns, we did not try more earnestly to bring them to the fountain of living water, cheering them with words more potent than any charm—"He that drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but he that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life."

CHAPTER XVI.

PASTORAL CARE OF THE YOUNG.

It may be a question whether the memorable charge of our Lord to Peter, "Feed my lambs," had reference to the case of children, or whether the class indicated was not rather that of young disciples, babes in Christ, imperfectly instructed in his doctrine. But there is no question that the case of the young demands very special attention from every faithful pastor; and as little is there a question that holy effort in this direction is for the most part eminently useful and amply blessed. Many is the pastor, and many the missionary, who, when disheartened by the settled indifference or the settled wickedness of the older section of their people, have turned wistfully and hopefully to the young; as if there was nothing for it but that the carcases of the older generation should fall in the wilderness, and their children only, with their more soft and tender hearts, should receive God's grace, and possess the land.

The Christian Church in our age has awaked to a sense of its relation to the young. What is the precise standing of baptized children in the Christian Church is a question that has caused not a little speculation, and that is still involved in considerable mist. This is not the place to consider the bearing of baptism on the

spiritual state of the children, or on the duties or the hopes of parents who have dedicated them in that ordinance to Christ; but it is quite suitable that we should advert to the relation in which baptism places children to the minister and to the church. Baptized children become members of the visible church. They are an integral part of our congregations, and it is our duty to look on them as such, especially when we meet for worship. They ought to be present to our minds as a part of that large family with whom and for whom we unite in the worship of God. Their sins and infirmities, as well as those of the older members, ought to be in our thought in our public confessions; their preservation, health, and well-being generally, ought to swell our thanksgivings; and their difficulties, temptations, and trials, especially in connexion with the service of God, ought to be before us in our supplications at the throne. Their edification, too, ought to be considered in our preaching, in so far as that can be secured without loss to others; and the winning of them to Christ, and their confirmation and establishment as living members of the church, ought constantly to be contemplated both by office-bearers and members in their intercourse with them. It is quite true that our feelings and actings ought to be very much the same towards all children, whether they have been baptized or not; the difference in the case of baptized children being, that the obligation has been formally and deliberately acknowledged by us in a solemn and public ordinance, so that baptized children may claim from us as a right those Christian attentions which come to others simply in the way of favour.

The young persons in an ordinary congregation fall into two classes according to their age—children, and

young men and women. The pastoral methods applicable to each are somewhat different.

I. CHILDREN.—Confining our attention to the duties of the *Minister*, we may inquire first, what regard ought to be had to the case of children in the ordinary services of the congregation; and second, whether any special services or meetings ought to be held for their behoof.

1. As to the ordinary services. It is the custom of some ministers to assign a particular part of each discourse to the children, or to conclude with a general application to them of the subject on which they have been preaching. But if either of these methods is adopted *as a stated practice*, it can hardly fail to have the effect of leading the children to believe that there is little or no obligation on them to give attention to the other parts of the sermon. An occasional appeal to children in the middle or at the close of an ordinary sermon, in the winning tone of voice by which children are usually addressed, may be exceedingly useful; but as a rule, it is hard upon a preacher to be obliged abruptly to change his level, and come down to the capacity of little children, as well as undesirable both for the children and the congregation generally. Would it not be better that discourses generally were constructed in such a way as not to be wholly beyond the reach of children? If the structure were simple, the style clear, and the tone of voice natural; if the lines of Scripture were followed closely, if illustrations abounded, and other faculties besides the reason were habitually appealed to, an intelligent child might very soon find much to interest him in an ordinary sermon. The habit of attention would then be formed, and though there would be much in the sermon beyond his grasp,

his capacity of understanding would be constantly growing. Our Lord's parables, for example, in their external aspect, were as easily followed by the young as by the old, nor does he appear to have found it necessary to address grown people at one time and children at another. He appears to have had a wonderful power of arresting both; and had we been present when he delivered such a discourse as that of the sheep and the goats, we should probably have found that the eye was as closely riveted, and the attention as thoroughly secured, in the case of the children as in that of the grey-bearded men or careworn women that pressed so eagerly to hear him.

2. Separate services for children may assume various forms. In the first place, there may be occasional sermons, expressly addressed to them. Where there are two regular meetings of the congregation for public worship, there can be no reasonable objection to one of these being occasionally appropriated to the children. If we are to deal with children effectually on spiritual subjects, two physical conditions are indispensable: first, that the minds of the children be fresh, and second, that the same be true of the preacher. An exhausted preacher, or an exhausted audience, will be associated with wandering attention on the part of the children, ending, most probably, in their falling asleep. There is more likelihood of obtaining a fresh preacher and a fresh audience, if the sermon to the young is at an ordinary hour, and not at a supernumerary meeting.

Successful preachers to the young place themselves at once, by an instinctive process, *en rapport* with their audience; find the level of their thoughts and feelings; lay hold and keep hold of their attention through avenues that they know to be open; and press them

with the degree and kind of force which they feel to be likely to succeed. The process hardly admits of specific rules. A good preacher to the young, however, will be careful to choose a text short, bright, striking; the arrangement will be simple, and the heads as obvious and as easily to be remembered as possible; a large part of his sermon will be illustration, and he will be specially careful to make a specific and not a vague application. Above all things he will study to speak in a natural tone of voice. His performance will be at the furthest possible remove from that of an essay read before an audience; most emphatically it will be a word spoken to them. In preaching to children, one can easily get rid of the fear of man which bringeth a snare, and without dread of offence say things which one might shrink from uttering face to face with the old. There is a directness and point in such preaching that often contrasts very favourably with the unnatural tones and vague circumlocutions of ordinary discourses. Many a grown-up person feels that his mind gets instruction from the simple explanations of doctrine given to the children, and that his conscience is quickened by the direct appeals made to them on duty. The relish for "bairns' hymns" which marked the dying hours of Dr. Guthrie is often paralleled by a relish for "bairns' sermons," even in the healthy hours of grown-up men. A successful preacher to the young rouses in older persons feelings that never grow old, and brings back to them something of the consciousness of childhood,—the happy season of golden dreams, which, though dashed in the meantime, are nevertheless destined to a fulfilment more glorious than this life could ever have given.

In preaching to the young, many American ministers

have been highly successful; such men as Dr. Todd of Pittsville and Dr. Newton of Philadelphia have attained the first rank in this department of work. The American mind has such a proclivity to sharp, terse forms of expression, clever analogies and illustrations, keen analysis of feelings, vivid description and warm colouring, that we do not wonder that it should excel in addresses to which such qualities contribute so largely.

Another form of service or exercise for children, adopted by some ministers, is that of an examination, occurring about once a month, and based on the sermon which precedes it, or on some subject that has been prescribed. While this method is exposed to the drawback of necessarily finding the children somewhat exhausted, if they have given attention to the public service that has preceded it, it possesses the advantage, on the other hand, of allowing the minister to ascertain how far the discourse or the subject of examination has been understood by them. It gives him the opportunity of finding out what amount of knowledge they have actually attained, and, though with less certainty, what impression has been made on their hearts.

We do not enter in this place into the subject of Sunday-schools, or into that of "children's churches," as those meetings have been called, which, being held at the hour of public worship, come in its place to the children for whom they are designed. Our subject is the work of the minister, and it is evident that except in the way of general oversight, the minister can take no more than an occasional part in these. The children's church is an interesting experiment in the art of attaching to Sabbath ordinances masses of children who would not otherwise acquire the habit of church-going,

and in the art of framing services in which there is a fair prospect of children taking an intelligent and lively part. The experiment has been too short to enable us to judge as to its permanent effects. One thing, however, is obvious; the pleas sometimes advanced in its favour cast a somewhat painful reflection on the prevailing dulness of the pulpit. If the children's church can be expected to have the result of permanently introducing many children, otherwise sure to neglect them, to the ordinary services of the Sanctuary, these services must receive a new element of liveliness, otherwise children trained at the livelier meetings will not attend them. And this is but one of many considerations that go to prove what a great desideratum liveliness is in our public services at the present day; no danger to which they are exposed is so great as that of becoming useless through their own heaviness.

Whatever plan may be followed by the minister, it is very desirable that, without taking any heavy burden upon him, he should have some mode of coming occasionally into contact with the children. It is of great importance that he should come to know and to love them, that they too should come to know and to love him, and that both should feel that they have to do with each other. It is worth while too, to consider whether the old law of the Scotch Church might not be revived, by which all the children of a congregation were required to be examined by the minister at the several ages of nine, twelve, and fourteen. The Scotch Church has always been most desirous to secure the godly up-bringing of the young. If the older methods were marked by more authoritative strictness, and the modern possess more of affection and attraction, it is well to remember that each element has its own

place, and that a judicious combination of both is the consummation most to be desired.

II. While the detailed religious instruction of the children must be carried on chiefly by their parents and others in the congregation, the case of young men and young women ought to engage much more of the minister's own time and energies.

The practice of catechizing the young is coeval with the dawn of Christianity. St. Luke in the introduction to his Gospel refers to the catechetical training of Theophilus—"that thou mightest know the certainty of the things wherein thou hast been catechetically instructed (κατηχήθης)." Catechetical lectures, as we have seen, formed an important feature of the public services of the patristic church, the process of question and answer probably following the delivery of the discourse. The skilful use of the question is beyond all doubt what gives most value to the Bible class. The benefits of this mode of instruction, when conducted with skill and animation, and not turned into a mere preaching, are many. (1.) It enables one to give a backbone to the religious training of the young, so that the truths of Christianity shall be apprehended in their relations and connexions, and not lie in a confused heap in the mind. (2.) It gives the minister an opportunity of perceiving what is apprehended, and what is misunderstood by those whom he has to instruct. (3.) It sets in motion the mental faculties of the young, —trains them to digest their spiritual food. (4.) It brings the minister and his young people into close, interesting, and most profitable contact at the period of life when they are most susceptible of being influenced by him. (5.) And it secures to him, in the course of a generation, a trained and instructed audience, by whom

the ordinary pulpit ministrations will be much more appreciated, and who will be carried much further on in the knowledge of divine truth.

So manifold are the benefits of catechizing, that in the olden time, when the authority of the church was more fully and readily recognised than it is now, the catechizing of all the people in detachments or districts was one of the regular duties of the ministry. In some parts of the country the practice is still maintained. Having begun my ministry in a country parish where all and sundry attended the "diets of catechizing," I can certify that they were not attended with the awkwardness that might have been supposed. The people, however, were unsophisticated, with little trace of social distinctions: farmers and their servants being much the same in education, dress, and manners. But as it might not now be practicable, even if it were wise, and as it would not be wise even if it were practicable, to unite persons of all ages and ranks in one promiscuous catechizing, we will speak of the practice only in connexion with that part of his people whom a minister may reckon on to take part in it—young men and young women.

In country congregations, and where the people are engaged in hard manual labour, it is commonly difficult to form Bible classes except on the Lord's Day. While this doubtless entails a heavy task on a minister's strength, it has an advantage on the other hand, for the minds of the young persons are more likely to be in a suitable frame for taking part in the exercises of the class than they probably would be in a week-day evening. Let it be understood at the same time that well-taught classes will attract a considerable attendance on any evening, and that sometimes the

reason why a Bible class collapses is, that it is so poorly conducted as to be hardly worth attending.

The question now presents itself—What is the best mode of conducting a Bible class? To this question the very name of the class furnishes the first part of the answer. Undoubtedly, the Word of God should have prominence here as in the public services of the sanctuary. The opening up of the Scriptures in a somewhat more analytic way than the pulpit admits of affords an admirable opportunity to the minister to adapt himself to the cravings and capacities of the young. So many subjects present themselves that the difficulty lies in selecting. The life of Christ; the Miracles, the Parables; the Acts of the Apostles; an Epistle, like Romans or Hebrews; Bible biography; Bible history; Bible geography; Bible typology; Bible prophecy—are all susceptible of most interesting treatment in a Bible class. The ease and familiarity with which such a class is conducted admits of many things being introduced in the way of illustration and in the way of application which could hardly be spoken from the pulpit. And a minister may be very plain and very earnest in pressing truth on the conscience of individual members of the class.

In a church which possesses such a summary of doctrine and duty as the Shorter Catechism, the exposition of that symbol ought surely to have a leading place in classes for young men and women. We say this deliberately, without being indiscriminate admirers of the Catechism. Undoubtedly its tone is somewhat hard and cold, and we cannot but regret the absence of allusion to the free offer of the Gospel, or of that view of redemption indicated in the glorious words of our Lord, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only

begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16). But notwithstanding its defects, we question if any treatise of the size ever contained a larger measure of truth, expressed in clear and careful language. Its bold announcement of man's chief end impresses us like a great stroke of genius at the beginning. Its definitions of effectual calling, justification, the offices of Christ, faith, repentance, the sacraments, and prayer, are in themselves theological treatises, each a *multum in parvo*, like those hardly visible photographs to which the microscope may be applied at its highest magnifying power, without the discovery of a trace of what is superfluous or unmeaning. Helps for elucidating its meaning are abundant. Thomas Vincent's explanation, though two hundred years old, is not yet antiquated, nor Richard Watson's, with its ample store of illustration, furnished liberally from the resources of a well-read and well-equipped mind. Matthew Henry's questions are so constructed as to be all answered in the language of Scripture—ingenious, but of little use for real catechizing. Fisher, one of the early Seceders, goes deep into questions of doctrine, while Paterson sets the example of analytical treatment, which is more in accordance with the modern idea in teaching. Such helps may be used as helps, chiefly in one's own study; the teacher who uses them in his class will find that he gets but lamely along. The great thing in opening up a question is to state clearly and strongly its main proposition or subject; then to indicate the various particulars which enter into the statement regarding it; then to establish, illustrate, and apply each; and finally, to show how they all converge on the proposition affirmed. While you thus deal with the subject,

care must be taken to interest your class; let the attempt be made to stimulate thought, and get them to exercise their minds; give them points to explain and difficulties to investigate: ask them the reason for this and the meaning of that; let the drier work of the class be relieved by copious illustration; and let the minister study to be animated and cheerful in his manner, and interesting in his style.

There are other subjects which have often been introduced with advantage in Bible-classes. Books have been used like *The Pilgrim's Progress,* Paley's *Natural Theology,* Keith's *Evidence of Prophecy,* Hodge's *Way of Life,* and even, in very select cases, Butler's *Analogy,* and the *Philosophy of the Plan of Salvation.* But such subjects, or at least the majority of them, are suitable only in particular cases; and the minister must exercise his own judgment as to the fit circumstances in which to resort to them.

Occasional written exercises are a most useful appendage to a Bible-class, and are contributed readily when the scholars have had a tolerable education. On the other hand, if writing and spelling are a terror to them, such exercises cannot be expected, except peculiar encouragement be given to make the trial.

It needs hardly to be observed that for the business of such a class, careful preparation is indispensable on the part of the minister. Nay, something in the form of written preparation may be urged. To write out the leading questions, and make jottings of the explanations and illustrations employed will commonly be of very great service. It will be found to freshen the business very materially, if he can introduce incidents of the day, or passages from miscellaneous reading, to throw light on the matter in hand. The trouble that may be taken

at first in preparation for such a class will be amply repaid in the subsequent years of his ministry.

Under such a scheme of instruction, with the blessing of God, a minister can hardly fail to train a superior order of young people. Only he must beware of thinking or of leading them to think that his chief object is to instruct. In opening such a class it ought to be announced broadly that the great aim is to secure not their instruction merely, but their salvation. All through, this aim must be kept in mind. The opening prayer must ever recognise it, and the young persons should be made to feel that this is looked for. Personal and kindly dealing, one by one, with the members of a class so conducted, is usually of the greatest avail. Decision for Christ is often the blessed consequence; and at an early period, the young minister is often permitted to reap the first-fruits of the coming harvest.

When thus conducted, the Bible-class becomes the natural forerunner of a second meeting for Christian instruction and influence.

The class for young communicants.—Properly speaking, this is rather a class for Christian influence than instruction. The candidate for communion ought to be already well versed in the fundamental truths of the Gospel; and the special business of the communion class, if there are so many as to require a class, should be that of dealing with the conscience and the heart —with a view not only to prevent unworthy communicating, but to promote an enlightened, happy and most profitable fellowship with Christ at his Table. But it is not easy to secure that no persons shall offer themselves as communicants but those who have passed through the Bible-classes. In such a case, it seems desirable that the minister should explain the more

vital questions in the Catechism—such as effectual calling, justification, faith in Jesus Christ, making sure in this way that the doctrinal foundation is firmly laid. Therefore it will be well to go over, fully and carefully, the questions on the Sacraments in general, and that on the Lord's Supper in particular, supplementing the Shorter Catechism by the additional questions in the Larger; to open up, very searchingly, the words of institution, dwelling on the two acts—first the *taking*, and then the *eating* and *drinking*, as the key to the whole; to read, along with this, certain very practical chapters, such as John iii. or Ephesians ii., where the heavenly origin and inward nature of the Christian Life are clearly set forth, closing with a portion of the Song of Solomon, or with the forty-fifth Psalm, to illustrate the more fragrant aspects of fellowship with Christ. It is right to aim not only at rousing the conscience and the heart all through, but specially by conversation and prayer with every candidate, both at the beginning and the close of the class, to endeavour to learn something of their state, and to advise accordingly. It is a time of remarkable dealing of the Holy Spirit with the hearts of young persons; the conscience is tender; they will bear any amount of earnest dealing; it is a sort of high-tide in their spiritual history, a time of peculiar sensibility, on the improvement of which the most precious results depend. A short printed paper, expressing the nature of the profession made and the obligations incurred by communicants may be put into the hands of each; and when the consent of all parties involved has been obtained to their admission, the minister and elders will admit them, commending them by solemn prayer to the grace of God. Manuals for young communicants are very abundant, but in most cases they are too compli-

cated, and are apt to bewilder the novice, and to distract his attention from the one great business of the Lord's Supper—receiving Christ and feeding on him. The best manual is the words of institution (Matt. xxvi. 26; 1 Cor. xi. 24). Perhaps the best commentary on these words is the question, "What is the Lord's Supper?"[1] The best form of self-examination, "What is required of them that would worthily partake of the Lord's Supper?"[2] The best help for solving the doubts of the timid, "May one who doubteth of his being a Christian or of his due preparation, come to the Lord's Table?"[3] And the best directory for the subsequent improvement of the ordinance is the answer in the Larger Catechism to the question, "What is the duty of Christians after they have received the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper?"[4]

[1] "The Lord's Supper is a sacrament wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine according to Christ's appointment, his death is showed forth; and the worthy receivers are, not after a corporal and carnal manner but by faith, made partakers of Christ's body and blood, with all his benefits, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace."

[2] "It is required of them that would worthily partake of the Lord's Supper that they examine themselves of their knowledge to discern the Lord's body, of their faith to feed upon him, of their repentance, love, and new obedience; lest, coming unworthily, they eat and drink judgment to themselves."

[3] "One who doubteth of his being in Christ, or of his due preparation to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, may have true interest in Christ, though he be not yet assured thereof, and in God's account hath it, if he be duly affected with the apprehension of the want of it, and unfeignedly desires to be found in Christ, and to depart from all iniquity, in which case (because promises are made, and this sacrament is appointed for the relief even of weak and doubting Christians) he is to bewail his unbelief, and labour to have doubts resolved; and so doing, he may and ought to come to the Lord's Supper, that he may be further strengthened."

[4] "The duty of Christians . . . is seriously to consider how they have behaved themselves therein, and with what success: if they find quickening and comfort, to bless God for it, beg the continuance of it, watch against relapses, fulfil their vows, and en-

But it may happen that persons peculiarly situated offer themselves, particularly to the missionary-minister, in whose case some modification of the ordinary method must be resorted to. When grown-up persons well advanced in life make application, the minister's duty is often most difficult. It is peculiarly difficult if there be a want of spiritual perception in the applicants, an inability to comprehend the very meaning of the new birth, accompanied, as that often is, by the feeling that the reluctance of the minister to admit them is based on some suspicion that they are living in wickedness, or on some personal dislike to themselves. A tender-hearted minister, placed in this dilemma, is most deeply to be felt for. If possible, let him co-operate with the elders, and get them to share the responsibility, for it is not right that he should bear it alone. If even elders have not spirituality enough to sympathize with him, what can remain for him but to throw himself more unreservedly than ever upon his Master, and from him seek not only direction, but also the spirit of mingled tenderness and faithfulness? Let me say, however, that much allowance ought to be made for persons in mature life coming forward with the desire to be communicants. Allowance should be made for that *feeling of reserve* which holds so many in bondage and keeps their hearts so close; for that *nervous excitement* which, even under a stolid look and manner, may be embarrassing and bewildering them; and for that *sense of shame* which

courage themselves to a frequent attendance on that ordinance: but if they find no present benefit, more exactly to review their preparation to, and carriage at, the sacrament: in both which if they can approve themselves to God and their own consciences, they are to wait for the fruit of it in due time: but if they see they have failed in either, they are to be humbled, and to attend upon it afterwards with more care and diligence."

is gendered by the fact of their coming comparatively so late in life—acknowledging thereby their past remissness. When we read the accounts of the baptism of John the Baptist, or of the admissions into the Church by the Apostles, we perceive that they acted on the principle of seldom shutting the door against those who applied. The circumstances of the times are not quite parallel; to make application in those times was more of a test than it is now. But without sanctioning the practice of indiscriminate admission to the Lord's Supper, in all cases where the desire to become a communicant is expressed with apparent honesty by an adult, it ought, we think, to be treated with the largest measure of charity. Let the dealings with the conscience be as earnest and faithful as possible; but let an absolute refusal be the result only of a clear and insuperable sense of duty. It were a hard thing to keep from the Supper some sin-worn wasted soul, that can say but little about itself except that it is hungry and would fain taste the bread of life.

The question is often put with eagerness, On what grounds ought the minister to decide whether or not to recommend the admission of applicants to the Supper? The answer to this question is virtually to be found in the province which our church assigns to each of the three parties who ought to take part in examining him, previous to his admission—the minister, the elders, and the applicant himself. It is the duty of the minister to examine into his knowledge; it is the province of the elders to examine into his life and conversation; and it is the province of the applicant himself to examine into the state of his heart. "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith." The minister is not therefore called on to come to a decision in favour of

the applicant grounded on the state of his heart. But though not entitled to decide this question authoritatively, as the ground of his admission, he is both entitled and bound in a friendly way to warn and exhort all not to come to the table unless they believe that they have in their hearts accepted the offer of the gospel. More particularly in the case of the young; having watched over them as a nurse watches over her children, he cannot but have his own view of the state of their hearts, and it is seldom that a young candidate would be so reckless as to press forward in opposition to the friendly counsel of the minister. There is no duty in the discharge of which faithful and loving ministers have more searchings of heart, or are more powerfully reminded of the source of true preparation —"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zech. iv. 6).

CHAPTER XVII.

PASTORAL ENGAGEMENTS AND MEETINGS.

UNDER this head we purpose to embrace three classes of pastoral duties: 1. Those connected with marriages, baptisms, deaths, and similar occasions; 2. Week-day meetings for prayer, exposition of Scripture, and promotion of an interest in missions; 3. Occasional special meetings for promoting a revival of religion, and elevating the standard of Christian life and practice.

I. It is a noteworthy fact that the duty of the minister brings him into special contact with his people at every important crisis in their family history. If their minds be too dull and sluggish in their ordinary moods, they are shaken up into more activity on these unusual occasions, and present to an earnest minister a greater susceptibility of impression. He who watches for souls will be careful of these opportunities, and try much to turn them to profitable account.

To begin with *Marriage*. The minister has not only a right to be present, but his services are indispensable, except on those rare occasions when people are satisfied with the ministry of the Registrar. In Scotland, where marriages are commonly celebrated in private houses, some pains is needed on the part of the officiating minister to give to the service its proper tone. Met on occasion of a marriage festivity, people like to dwell on its brightsome aspect, and were a minister to set him-

self right in opposition to the festive current in which their feelings flow, he would only provoke an unprofitable and unpopular collision. Yet, on the other hand, even marriage has a grave and solemn side; the commencement of life's journey, even by the first pair in Eden, was a solemn as well as a gladsome event. It is so even still; and the skilful minister will find, beneath the festive current that bubbles and glitters on the surface, a deeper feeling that will awake to his call. To this more solemn spirit he makes his appeal during the formal service; and it will not only not be out of place for him, but actually in keeping with the purpose of his presence, if he endeavours to keep it from being trampled on all the time he is there. The view thus brought out may operate as a check on that excess of frivolity which such occasions are apt to breed, and tend to secure that chastening of joy with a more solemn feeling which is appropriate to a life so short and so chequered as this, where even they that have wives must be as though they had not, and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not, because the fashion of this world passeth away.

The performance of marriage is one of the occasions in the Scottish Church, when, missing something of a liturgical form, the minister is led to construct one for himself. The necessity of brevity, neatness, and point makes this almost indispensable. A lumbering address and lumbering prayers are never more completely out of keeping. The service ought to begin with a short prayer, acknowledging God as the God alike of providence and of grace, casting ourselves as sinners on his mercy, and imploring his blessing, especially in connexion with his own ordinance of marriage. The address ought to be founded on the passage in the Old

Testament where marriage is instituted, and one or other of the passages in the New which lay down the duties of the Christian husband and wife. Whatever counsels are founded on these ought to be brief, and may probably be best directed to impress the importance of seeking God's blessing, as the one indispensable condition of all true happiness, prosperity, and peace. The question to the bride and bridegroom ought to be put in a solemn tone, and with a specific recognition of their being in the presence of God; and when they are declared to be married persons, the declaration ought to be made in His name and by His authority. The concluding prayer will invoke the divine blessing on the married couple in all their interests, on soul and body, on their basket and on their store, on their going out and on their coming in; and will specially recognise the families of both, as well as the other families represented by those present. The apostolic benediction will appropriately conclude the service, the whole of which need not occupy more than a few minutes.

Baptisms, as conducted in the Presbyterian Church, afford an opportunity to the minister to stir his people up on one of the most important of practical duties, reaching out to an extent to which no limits can be assigned. The only parties whose responsibility is publicly recognised being the parents, the minister is called, both in private dealings and in public exhortations, to press their consciences with their obligation and privilege to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. In the baptismal address, something of uniformity is almost indispensable, the parents having a right to know beforehand the obligations that are to be laid upon them. This address ought to be avowedly founded on Scripture, and may

be rendered more impressive by reference both to the beacons and examples which Scripture contains. In our churches it is usual to address the father alone, but it would be an improvement, as in some other churches, if the father and the mother were together; and in any case, health permitting, the presence of the mother also is most desirable, as her heart is usually more susceptible on the subject of her infant's welfare, and her influence in training him is far more constant and usually more powerful.

At *funerals* the official services of the minister are again required. The policy of the Scottish Reformers to tear up, root and branch, those practices of Popery which had proved most mischievous in fostering superstition, and leading people away from the true ground of salvation, led them to discourage all religious services at the burial of the dead. Gradually, however, we have been receding from this extreme position, and now it is customary to have reading of the Scriptures and prayer when the mourners are met, occasionally prayer at the grave, and not unfrequently, when the persons are of mark in the congregation, funeral sermons, or allusions to the departed. Nor do we see any danger in these practices, so long as we keep up sound teaching in our pulpits on all the great matters of the faith. There is no difficulty in the selection of appropriate passages from Scripture. But there is some danger of letting the prayer become an *éloge* on the dead, and here the greatest caution must be used. In the case of persons well known for their consistent Christian character, the company are prepared to join in thanksgiving for grace bestowed by God upon them. In the case of others, they can only hesitate, and should the officiating minister be too pronounced, they will be

perplexed, but they will not be able to join in such a prayer. Even at funerals the minister must pray as the mouth-piece of the company, and abstain from expressing views in which it is not reasonable to expect that they shall be able to join.

The delivery of funeral sermons, or the making of allusions to deceased members from the pulpit, ought to be carefully restricted to the case of persons who by loftiness of Christian character or by eminent services to the church will be generally admitted to deserve the recognition. When such a practice becomes promiscuous, it loses its effect; jealousy is apt to be roused when any are passed over, and men of very mixed character are liable to be canonized, about whom perhaps—the less that is said the better.

When death occurs in a house, the minister is expected to be in close communication with the bereaved family, comforting them as he may be able, and urging them to take those solemn views of life, death, and eternity, which such an event is fitted to urge. But the true servant of God will never be satisfied with the performance of his mere official service on such occasions. Regarding them as seasons when special access is afforded to the hearts of his people, and when the door is opened by Providence for near and earnest dealings with the soul, he will strive to press the truth home with peculiar fervour. The fact that the minister is so closely related to every occasion of joy and especially of sorrow in the history of his flock, while it is greatly fitted to endear him to them, gives him a hold, and a power of usefulness, which ought never to be overlooked.

Nor ought he to confine his Christian offices to the more recognised and open occasions of this kind. The

watchful eye and the watchful heart of the true minister will notice when a son or a daughter is about to leave home for school, or college, or business, or it may be to settle in a distant colony; and regarding that occasion as not less really a crisis in the history of the family, than a birth or a death, will take the opportunity to offer his friendly counsel to the departing member, and carry them all to the mercy-seat to implore the guidance and the blessing of the God of Bethel. In public prayer, too, without obtruding particular cases, he may cause the petitions he offers to embrace such various providential circumstances as are seldom far removed from the earnest feelings of some members of his flock. It is very certain that a living chord will thus be struck; and while the minister is prized and loved for his sympathy, his prayers will be backed by fervent Amens issuing from the inmost sanctuary of their hearts.

II. The next class of pastoral duties to which we shall advert is that of meetings for prayer, reading the Scriptures, and collateral objects.

Ever since the evangelical revival of the last forty years, some such meetings have sprung up wherever there was any manifestation of religious earnestness. It must be owned, however, that in many cases they have not assumed a very definite shape, and that where the first fresh feeling out of which they sprung has subsided, the effort to keep them up has often been a laborious one.

In Scotland, we can hardly be said as yet to have realized the true conception of a "prayer-meeting." The meeting so termed is generally little else than a diluted edition of a pulpit service. It does not appear to me that this meeting, as it is often conducted, has

in it the elements of permanent vigour. It is a kind of cross between the cottage lecture, the prayer-meeting proper, and the pulpit service—without what is most valuable in any. It is better, if possible, to keep these separate, and let each possess its characteristic features.

The cottage lecture derives its special charm from its domestic character, being a meeting of a few neighbouring families to hear the Word and join in praise and prayer. It is family worship on a larger scale. It has a kind of hallowing effect on the house and on the neighbourhood; the simplicity, ease, and affectionateness of the service have a great charm, especially for the rural mind; and it tends, perhaps, to gender more of a kindly, neighbourly, Christian spirit than even the Lord's Day service, where many of the people are unacquainted, and a distant feeling towards one another must to some degree prevail.

Of the prayer-meeting proper I have seen much more characteristic samples in the United States than in this country. Though the Fulton Street daily prayer-meeting in New York can hardly be considered a general model, yet in many respects it is fitted to give to all of us very valuable lessons. It is really, as its name denotes, a meeting for prayer. Men go there simply to pray, and in this very respect it has had a wonderful effect in educating Christian people to believe in prayer. Many prayers are offered in the course of the hour (interspersed with hymns, reading a few verses, or narrating cases), and in every instance the prayers are short, pointed, and fervent. They are like arrows from the bow of the strong—jets of petition darting heavenwards, instead of prolonged formal prayers, with little point and little soul. In the more prosperous congregations in the United States, the con-

gregational prayer-meetings are of somewhat similar character. They are conducted by the office-bearers and members, not by the minister. Dr. Cuyler of Brooklyn, New York, has said in our hearing that he hardly ever took part, except as a listener, in the prayer-meeting of his congregation. Congregational meetings of this kind are the only prayer-meetings that answer to the idea, and have in them the elements of stability. Not only are they full of the atmosphere of prayer, but they promote and deepen the spirit out of which they spring. Every meeting of this kind lays the foundation, as it were, of the next.

A week-day congregational lecture entails a very great additional labour on a minister, and where all the other pastoral duties are laboriously performed, is too exhausting to be looked for. Men with great facility of preaching may be able to overtake it, and to produce a discourse equal to those of the Lord's Day; but the temptation to slipshod preparation and crude performance is too great in ordinary cases. There seems to be no reason, however, why in towns a number of ministers should not combine, and taking a weekly lecture in turn, bestow their best strength upon it. The reason why such services have often died out is that those who have taken part in them have not given their best strength to them, and instead of producing what was better, have been content with a weaker service than usual.

It may happen that for a time the minister finds it impossible to get members of the congregation of lively and earnest spirit to aid him in conducting a real prayer-meeting. The training of the younger men is a work of time, and meanwhile, in any meeting for prayer, the duty falls chiefly on himself. When it

must be so, he ought still to study, as far as possible, to make the meeting answer to its name. His prayers ought not to be mere general devotions, but pleadings for the various classes of his flock, and for the various objects in which the congregation has an interest. His address ought to be directed, more than on ordinary occasions, to promote the spirit of devotion. The people ought to be able to feel as they leave, that business has been done at the throne of grace, and that it is to be expected that in answer to such pleadings blessings will descend from above. It will be found, too, that when prayer assumes such a form at the prayer-meetings, it will by-and-by acquire more of it in the church. Every thoughtful minister will readily understand how important all this is. The Christian people of Scotland have got the character of being intensely fond of preaching, but not of praying. And undoubtedly there is unhappily a measure of truth in the charge.

A prayer-meeting for missionary objects is highly desirable and important, probably once a month. To give it variety and special interest, tidings from the mission-field should be given in some shape. But nothing can be more dry or cheerless than the mere reading of long letters from a Missionary Record. Pains must be taken to excite an interest in what is read. Explanations must be given, if necessary, about the place, the missionary, and the people. The narrative must be skilfully linked on to something that is stirring in the people's minds. In some cases there are narratives so absorbing that they require no comment; such, however, are exceptional. When the circumstances are favourable, an excellent effect might be produced by the holding of such meetings on the

evening of the Lord's Day; and generally, in the ordinary services of the sanctuary, a much higher place ought to be given to the great missionary enterprise than is almost ever done. The hearts of the people ought to be directed habitually, and not by mere spasmodic efforts, to the missionary business of the Christian Church, expanded by the survey of the vast field of heathenism, and roused to pity, to effort, and to prayer, as St. Paul's was at Athens by the sight of the city given wholly to idolatry.

III. Is it ever desirable and proper to get up special meetings with a view to deepen and concentrate religious feeling, and to bring about what is called a revival of religion? For such meetings some persons have a great horror, while to others they are the objects of the utmost delight. Not a few worthy persons, of the more orderly and correct stamp, regard them as mere emanations of fanaticism, and think that if encouragement is to be given to the illiterate and impetuous men that often come to the front on such occasions, divine service will degenerate into mere sensuous excitement, and conscience and reason will be driven off the field by the surging force of spiritual passion. This, of course, is an extreme and therefore unsatisfactory view; the subject demands to be examined with more care and candour.

It is to be remarked, then, that even where the Word of God is fully and faithfully preached, there is a tendency in congregations to remain at rest. A preacher who has preached from week to week for many years to the same people, and who has the prospect of doing the same to the end of his life, can hardly fail to fall into a less urgent tone than one who is among them for but one brief day or one brief week. The people, too,

meeting quietly from week to week, without much outward difference between one week and another, do not ordinarily feel any necessity for immediate action in matters of religion. Accordingly, want of decision characterizes many persons who are not destitute of religious impressions, and who are not far from the kingdom of God. Something is needed to break in on the ordinary monotony and rouse an intenser feeling. In former days in Scotland, communion occasions were often turned to account in this way; they were great preaching festivals, and such communion services as those of the Erskines were often times of awakening and refreshing. In the Highlands, too, the same state of things prevailed. But in most parts of the country the extra services on sacramental occasions have lost their former power, and the manifest tendency is to fewer extra services and to more frequent and simple arrangements for the communion. Those who desire to see the prevalent languor of our congregations broken in upon by special efforts to produce a livelier state of feeling resort to a succession of meetings, night after night, for prayer and evangelistic addresses. But the minister ought not to leave such meetings to be organized by others. He ought himself to be at the head of them, backed by the elders, and the more godly and earnest members of the flock. Good is more likely to come out of any such movement when the spiritual *noblesse* of the congregation are in the attitude of prayerful desire and expectation, when their feelings are deeply exercised on behalf of their unconverted brethren, and they are prepared to back the movement with much earnest intercession. To guide a religious movement of this kind wisely is one of the highest achievements of sanctified wisdom and zeal.

The idea of bringing about a revival through any other means than prayer for the outpouring of the Spirit of God has to some minds the aspect of interference with the sovereign prerogatives of God. But in reality there is no more reason for expecting a revival without the use of suitable means, than for expecting any other spiritual result. There are means adapted to this as to other spiritual objects. This consideration deepens very greatly the responsibility of ministers, and calls for a profounder dependence on that wisdom which alone is profitable to direct.

Meetings designed for the purpose of promoting a revival of spiritual life require to be organized with more skill and care than are often brought to bear on them. In the first place, the very word "revival" indicates that the first object is to resuscitate spiritual earnestness in those who have already been born of God. It is to rouse them to more vivid impressions of divine truth, more solemn views of sin and guilt, more soul-stirring thoughts of the love of God and the grace of Christ, more grief and more love for a world lying in wickedness, and more intense prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. And any minister of the Gospel may be well assured that unless his own heart be stirred in this way, he cannot expect that he will be made the instrument of stirring up the hearts of others. If, however, by God's grace, there should come to the more godly part of his flock a spirit of special sensibility, prayerfulness and expectation, he is entitled to regard the time as suitable for an effort on behalf of those who are outside the kingdom, or hovering about the door.

It is recommended by some who have made a study of such movements, that a gradation of subjects be followed in meetings designed to awaken the careless,

and bring them safe within the kingdom of Christ. For the purpose of awakening, such topics as "the worth of the soul, the immediate and urgent claims of religion, the danger of delay, the deathbed of the sinner, the scenes of the last judgment, the final separation, the glories of heaven, and the retributions of eternity,"[1] are thought to be the most suitable. Next, it ought to be the aim to produce true convictions of sin. The false standards which men are wont to regard must be set aside, and the rule brought forward, however strict and condemning, by which God will judge us at the last day. The spirituality and searching character of the law should be opened up, and at the same time its excellence, fitness, and reasonableness. The aggravation of sin in neglecting the Son of God, notwithstanding his coming from heaven to Calvary for men's salvation, must be specially urged. Mere agitation or even distress of mind is not always a token of genuine conviction; nor can the conviction be sufficient either in quality or amount, until it prostrates men in the dust as lost sinners before God, who have no plea of their own to urge on their behalf and must therefore lie wholly at his mercy.

But awakened men are not necessarily converted men, and there is no small skill needed in guiding the awakened to conversion. "The considerations chiefly to be pressed now are such as these:—the obligation, the duty, of loving God and submitting to him; the duty of repenting and turning from sin; the duty of an immediate trusting in Christ; the perfect reasonableness of these requirements; the inherent propriety and excellency of them; the binding authority of God in

[1] Pond's *Pastoral Theology*, p. 162 (Boston, 1867). Dr. Pond has given special attention to this branch of pastoral work.

the case; our obligations of gratitude to him; the sufferings and love of Christ for us, his infinite sufficiency and our helplessness; his full atonement and our guilt."[1]

At this stage, it is of great importance to urge the freeness of the gospel offer; the completeness of the work of Christ; the call of God to the sinner to believe and live; not to work or wait indefinitely for some expected improvement on himself, but to come *as he is* accepting of Christ as all his salvation and all his desire.

"Among the dangers incident to the management of a revival movement, one is extreme caution, or fear of overdoing; the other is that of pushing the movement too fast, thereby injuring its character and bringing it to a speedy close. . . . The pastor rejoices in the work of begun revival; he feels his own responsibility in regard to it; his soul is excited and quickened under its influence; and he rushes into it under the impression that he cannot labour too fast, or do too much in a given time for the promotion of so good a cause. The consequence is, that he goes beyond his strength, is soon prostrated and unable to do anything. Or in his heated, excited state of mind, he is chargeable with indiscretions, which impair his influence, and hinder the progress of the work. He changes, it may be, the whole character of the revival, and turns it into a scene of excitement and extravagance."[2]

An acquaintance with the best narratives of awakenings, conversation with those who have had much to do with them, and experience of the work itself, are far better fitted to guide one in the management of them than any general instructions. The *Narrative of Surprising Conversions* in New England by President

[1] Pond, p. 172. [2] *Ibid.*

Edwards is one of the most interesting, impressive, and instructive memoirs ever published. It is eminently worthy of the study of every minister, for it combines the view of the philosopher and the saint, calm wisdom and deep spirituality, a burning desire for the welfare of souls, and a dread of the tares which the enemy is so ready to sow among the wheat. No single work is so well fitted to give one an intelligent view of the whole subject of a revival, its rise and progress, its crisis, and its decay; its risks and benefits, its good and evil. The life of Asahel Nettleton, the greatest of American revivalists, is also full of information and useful hints on the various aspects of the question. Some of the writings of the late Isaac Taylor may be noted likewise as bearing on this subject, which, like most of his works, are full of Christian wisdom and the results of careful and candid thought. The *Natural History of Enthusiasm* is in the main an apology for evangelical earnestness, with a careful exposition of the evils that come of it when allowed to run to seed. His *Fanaticism* indicates an advanced stage of religious degeneracy, when zeal for the Christian cause has become mixed with malignant feeling, and resorts to all manner of un-Christian devices to defeat its foes.

We have assumed throughout, that any religious movement of the nature of a revival must be presided over by the minister himself. If he deems it his duty occasionally to ask aid from men who devote themselves to revival work, it ought to be on the distinct understanding that they are to assist and not to supersede him when they come. Even where the pastor has been most deeply interested in the movement, it will sometimes be difficult to guide. Congregations have sometimes been brought to the verge of extinction

through the injudicious management of revivals. In other cases they have been singularly built up by the adoption of a wiser course. We have known instances of both. In one instance of the latter sort, where the congregation was doubled in numbers, and more than doubled in fervour and fruitfulness, the minister has told us that he kept his eye open to two opposite dangers—that of discouraging the development of life on the one hand, and that of fostering the extravagances often adhering, but not necessarily cohering, to it, on the other. He found great benefit in a recipe which he called the three S's,—Substitute, Suggest, Supplement. If any one wished a hymn of a somewhat ranting kind to be sung, he would invite the people to unite in singing, quietly substituting a more unexceptionable hymn; if they proposed an additional meeting at a late hour of the night, he would suggest that a meeting should be held next evening; if any one gave a one-sided address, he would supplement it himself by presenting the other side of the question. Thus, avoiding collision with the rushing stream, he contrived to guide it in a useful direction, and when the waters subsided a valuable deposit was left, and richer clusters have hung ever since on the branches of his vines.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK.

If the question be asked, To whom does it belong to take an active part in the maintenance of Christian ordinances, and the advancement of the kingdom of Christ? the answers to the question will embrace two extremes. One extreme is, that all such work belongs to the ordained minister; that he only has authority from his Master in the kingdom of Christ; and that any one else who meddles with sacred things intrudes without warrant into the sacred enclosure. The other extreme is, that all who have themselves been taught of God are equally entitled, nay, bound and obliged, to minister in His kingdom; and that for any one in that kingdom to assume and exercise authority over others, in virtue of his having been ordained by men, is to subvert the Master's order, and to hinder the full edification of the community. The one system, while it no doubt secures order and regularity, tends to restrict the service of Christ to certain formal acts, and excludes Christians, not ordained, from all service in the House of God, except what is menial and mechanical; the other, while affording ample scope for the exercise of gifts, makes no provision for order and authority, and tends to ecclesiastical anarchy. The best system must

be one which combines both objects; secures order and authority through office-bearers placed over the congregation, and yet affords free scope for the exercise of all their gifts and graces by those who are moved to help the cause of Christ.

The Presbyterian system, when duly ordered and developed, tends to secure this double object. It is based on the principle of "many members in one body, and all members not having the same office." It does not hold that the gifts bestowed by the Head of the Church for the spiritual welfare of the body are all concentrated in one individual; but, on the contrary, that they are distributed more or less throughout the members, and that scope for their orderly exercise ought to be freely afforded. It maintains, indeed, that over every congregation there ought to be one man who has been specially trained for the work of the ministry, and separated from secular pursuits in order that he may give his whole time and strength to the duties of his office. The right and warrant for this is partly that there were such men in the Church of the New Testament, and partly that experience is ever teaching that they are indispensable for the permanent order and edification of the Church. But however competent by natural gifts and spiritual grace any man may be to occupy the chief seat in a Christian synagogue, it is out of the question to suppose that he possesses all the gifts, and that no other member possesses any. In the flock of that very minister there may be some men who excel as judges of character, able to detect false pretence, and to form a just estimate of true worth; some may have an unusual gift in prayer; some, of very sympathetic heart, may be specially fitted for ministering to the sick and afflicted; others have the faculty of

winning the confidence of strangers, or of persons not connected with the flock; others have a happy knack of instructing the young; some have a great turn for evangelistic efforts; others are interested in the improvement of the psalmody; and some, endowed with rare persevering energy, will go on with the most trying work after others have abandoned it in despair. According to the constitution of the Presbyterian Church, certain qualified men ought to be selected, and, if approved, ordained to office in the congregation; while others, though not ordained, ought to be recognised, directed, and superintended in their efforts to do good.

Two classes, we hold, ought to be solemnly ordained to office. These are, elders and deacons. The example of the New Testament plainly requires this. In regard to elders, the New Testament shows that in every congregation there was a *body* of elders, to whom the spiritual oversight of the congregation was committed. Elders are always spoken of in the plural number. The minister, indeed, is but an elder (1 Pet. v. 1),—specially trained, however, and specially set apart for the service of the Church, and therefore entitled to preside, especially at the dispensation of word and sacraments; but differing from the other elders not in the nature of his office, but in the extent of his qualifications. The spiritual authority of the Church is shared with the minister and the elders. While, therefore, the lay-elders of a congregation (that is, those not separated from secular callings) are to concede to the minister those duties for which his training and standing specially qualify him, they are to do what they can through their own gifts for the spiritual welfare of the congregation over which they bear rule equally with him. In like manner, though in another sphere, the deacons are

ordained, as in the time of the apostles (Acts vi. 6), for the administration of the temporal affairs of the church. At the same time it is to be remarked that even in the Presbyterian Church, where the office of the deacon is regarded as instituted for the management of secular interests, it has not been held imperative to ordain deacons under all circumstances, and that on this point the practice varies. What we are concerned to remark is, that every duly-equipped congregation possesses a body of ordained office-bearers, through whom, with the fullest regard to order and authority, provision is made for the exercise of the gifts and graces of the *élite* of the members.

But it is evident from the New Testament that elders and deacons, though the only persons who are said to have been formally ordained, were not the only persons who were allowed to labour in the church. The sixteenth chapter of Romans contains the apostle's greeting to many men and women who were labouring in the church at Rome. There is no reason to suppose that all these were expressly ordained to an office. At the top of the list is Phœbe—a servant or deaconess of the church at Cenchrea, but of whom we have no reason to believe that she was ordained. Priscilla and Aquila, a married couple, come next, the wife's name preceding the husband's. It is extremely improbable that the long list of active men and women that follows were persons who had all been ordained to office. But all of them were actively using their abilities for the advancement of the kingdom, and in so doing they were not only recognised, but commended by the apostle. It follows that in every well-equipped congregation, in addition to those expressly ordained to office, but under their sanction and superintendence, there ought to be a

body of active workers, engaged in the various operations of Christian love and zeal which the circumstances call for. In many such congregations we find a body of Sunday-school teachers, or of helpers in a children's church; a body of district visitors; a young men's association, a missionary association, a psalmody association, a school committee, and a mothers' meeting. It is right that all these should be recognised, and it is indispensable that they be superintended by the office-bearers. Their work ought to be the subject of public prayer, and it ought to be made plain that they are not mere free lances, but that they labour under the warm wing and paternal guidance of the Church. Here then is another great field for the use and exercise of the gifts and graces of all the members; a field inviting every man and woman in a congregation who is capable of any service, and leaving all without excuse who stand in the market-place idle.

It is not very easy to draw a line in theory between the services which are peculiar to the minister and those which may lawfully be performed by other members of a congregation. And as the line cannot easily be drawn in theory, it is not desirable to make it hard and fast in practice. It is evident that the apostles did not confine the deacons to serving tables, but allowed them, when qualified, to preach the word. Nor does it seem at all wise to try to shut the mouths of zealous men who on the streets, or at mission-meetings, try to address their fellow-sinners on the things of salvation. So long as no real interference with the stated functions of the ministry takes place, and so long as the proceedings are practically though indirectly under the influence of the Church, it seems undesirable to interfere with the efforts of zealous men. Christian

zeal, at a white or even a red heat, is so rare a quality, that even if it should be somewhat eccentric, it is well, if possible, to give it line. The real danger is connected with a class of men who are not under the superintendence of any Church, who do not believe in the divine appointment of a regular ministry, and who are more given to deny its authority and undermine its influence than to accept its superintendence. But if more scope were afforded *within* for the labours of ardent and zealous men, there would be less opportunity for their subverting Church-order by operations *without*.

But there are other grounds on which this plan of co-operation in Christian work by all who have any fitness for it, is to be encouraged in congregations. It is worthy of being earnestly fostered on the ground of its extraordinary benefit to the workers themselves. It is, indeed, a very important and valuable means of grace. To be doing good to others is one of the best means of getting good to one's-self. "He that watereth shall be watered also himself" (Prov. xi. 29). There is an analogy here between the natural and the spiritual life. It is not merely by a process of direct nursing that the natural life becomes vigorous and robust. The man that confines himself to the house, that feeds on the tenderest dainties, that strives by every art to keep himself from draughts and damp, and on days entirely favourable takes a cautious airing at mid-day, is never strong. Bone and muscle are not developed by such treatment. If he would become strong, the coddling system must be abandoned, and his energies thrown into some pursuit *external to himself*, in following which his fibre may become firm, and his organs healthy and vigorous. The analogy is but an imperfect one, but it may serve to set Christian men and women on their

guard against the idea that a process of direct nursing, without the addition of some Christian occupation external to themselves, is the true way to preserve and develop their spiritual life. The most vigorous Christian men have found some such work not only beneficial but necessary. Dr. Chalmers had always a list of a few poor people among whom he visited, and Dr. Arnold of Rugby used to say that the two best safeguards against spiritual declension were prayer and visiting among the poor. Is there not something similar at the bottom of St. James's celebrated definition—"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James i. 27).

Constituted as men are, they seem to require something over and above the direct instigation of duty, or the direct action of the highest spiritual motives, to carry them along the way of holiness, and stimulate them to the exercise of the highest graces. In ordinary life it helps a man to be moral and self-controlled, that he has others to care for who are physically weaker than himself; and in this arrangement we see a wise provision of the God of Providence. In the spiritual life it helps a Christian to be self-denied, that he has others to watch over who are spiritually weaker than himself; and in this arrangement we see a wise provision of the God of grace. Let us illustrate our position first, by reference to one of the more mechanical of the Christian graces (although it is also, in its true exercise, much more than mechanical),—the giving of money to Christian objects. It is seldom that a mere *sense of duty* leads a rich Christian to be very liberal. But give him an interest in some definite Christian enterprise—attach him to some special mission or charity, where he sees

or knows what is doing, and what needs to be done, his heart will be enlarged, and his hand will open with his heart, till he becomes a proverb for generosity. Let us advance from this grace to that of prayer. Can any one fancy that the apostle Paul would have prayed as he did, if he had prayed only for himself? The fact of his having so many more to pray for drew out his desires, and kept him for ever repairing to the throne of grace—a duty which in other circumstances he might have sometimes neglected.

The same thing holds true of other graces, and of the Christian life generally. The bare sense of duty, or the direct view of the unseen, has not a sufficient impulsive force on the souls of most men. It is a great advantage to be associated with religious work. It is useful to have their interests and sympathies drawn to some definite enterprise. It is impossible to calculate the benefit in this respect which the overwhelming necessities of the Disruption conferred on the first members of the Free Church. It is equally impossible to calculate the benefit which connexion with the various congregational agencies already referred to has on the spiritual life of congregations everywhere. At the same time, let it be observed that there is a risk in this direction as well as a benefit. The risk is, the substitution of a kind of *ecclesiastical activity* for personal and earnest godliness. There is a risk of a certain fussiness about church-business being regarded as a certificate of saintship. This is very odious; and to speak honestly, it is a risk which we have not altogether avoided. But it is a miserable thing to lead the men of the world to suppose, when we invite them to join us, that we just invite them to take a prominent place in certain church-organizations, instead of inviting them to unite

with us in trying to love and follow Jesus, in every holy grace and beautiful habit of his spotless life. Connexion with the Church, whether in the fellowship of worship or in the fellowship of work, is but a means to an end; and that end is, "the perfecting of the saints, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. iv. 13).

These views as to Christian usefulness are not of secondary but of primary importance; and in order that they may be duly impressed on the people, they ought to have no insignificant place among the subjects of the pulpit. They constitute a topic that should be frequently handled; indeed, it is not too much to say, that it ought to be one of the *marked* topics of the pulpit, one of the subjects on which the preacher may say, "To write" (or to speak) "the same things unto you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe" (Phil. iii. 1). It should be the aim of the preacher to *indoctrinate* his people with this view of Christian duty and privilege, and to get them to regard it as one of the arrangements most necessary for the welfare of the Church, and for making her the blessing which she might be, and ought to be, to the world. Without going out of his way, the earnest minister will find many such opportunities. The parable of the talents; the parable of the labourers standing idle in the market-place; the mission of the seventy disciples by our Lord, apart from the twelve apostles; the commendations bestowed in the Epistles on the many men and women who served the Church; the counsels given us to exhort one another, to edify one another, to bear one another's burdens, to look not every man on his own

things, but every man also on the things of others; the example of Christ who came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many; the genius of the Christian religion, where he who is the servant of all is the greatest of all; the analogy of an army where not the commanding officer alone, but each soldier, is expected to fight; the necessities of the world; the necessities of the Church; the danger to Christians themselves of a state of stagnation, and the numberless blessings of a state of activity;—with related topics so pointed and so numerous as these, the minister will find no want of opportunity to press this theme. It is quite true that with a class of his people he will find it anything but popular. Reuben will prefer to abide in the sheep-cotes, Gilead beyond Jordan, Asher on the sea-shore, and Dan in ships (Judges v. 16, 17). The selfish and the worldly will resent the summons to bestir themselves and come to the help of the Lord. But let not the minister be disheartened by a growl or a grumble. Deeper down, in the conscience of the objector, is a voice of approval, and there are times when even such persons feel a sort of pride in the zeal of their minister and the activity of his people. Only pride is not the feeling to be encouraged or tolerated. Let the spirit of self-satisfaction and pride get a footing in a vigorous congregation,—alas for all that is lovely and of good report! The best wine, according to the proverb, turns to the sourest vinegar; and the best graces, whether in an individual or in a congregation, when thus perverted, become the most odious vices.

But it is time to address ourselves to the more practical aspect of the subject. How is the minister to go about this work of organization,—how are the

several agents to be selected and trained for this work, and how is the whole system to be maintained in vigour and efficiency? But I must honestly confess that I shrink considerably from approaching this view of the subject, because, in truth, it is too much to expect that the minister shall carefully and zealously perform the laborious duties of his pulpit and his pastorate, and at the same time be the originator and the mainspring of a great system of evangelistic operations. Congregations must speedily contemplate arrangements that will give their minister some relief in pulpit and pastoral labour, if it is expected of him to superintend the varied machinery now so frequently at work in connexion with congregational and territorial purposes. In the Church of England no minister in a charge of any magnitude bears the whole burden both of congregational and parochial work.

But suppose this difficulty to be got over; suppose the minister full of the desire to have an active congregation, and anxious to begin the varied operations, how is he to set about the work? In the first place, let him *pray* about it, and about every part of it, and about every agent that may be asked to take part in it, and about everything that may be undertaken by each. Let him seek to have the feeling deeply impressed on himself and all his coadjutors that this is not a warfare which he has begun on his own charges,—that it is the Master's work, on which they may expect the Master's countenance if only it be directed to the advancement of His glory. Further, let him be careful to consult the recognised, ordained office-bearers of the congregation. It may be that the elders will have little to say about it; they may have no help and no counsel to offer, and asking their advice and counte-

nance may be a mere form, without practical result. But on the other hand, there may be both counsel and help, and in any case there is such a tendency in men to complain if they are not sufficiently recognised in any undertaking that it is always well to cut off all occasion for such complaint.

Suppose, then, that the elders devolve the active prosecution of the work on the minister, the first thing he may have to settle is—the operations to be undertaken. This of course will depend on the nature of the case, the character of the population, and the composition of the flock. In general it is desirable to proceed cautiously, letting one branch of operations be pretty well established and consolidated before other branches are begun. Whether the work be a work of teaching, or of visiting, or of taking a part in meetings, the minister must not expect to find a sufficient staff of agents duly qualified at once. It will be well for him if he can find one or more capable of entering into the work intelligently, of giving it a tone, and of setting an example to the rest. But with regard to many he must lay his account with the need for a tolerably long process of education. Moreover, the minister must not expect that his people are to enter heartily at once into all that interests him, or are to rush to offer their services the moment he announces that he has need for them. He must take special means for awakening the interest of his people in them.

And here it may be useful for us to consider what it is that gives to some ministers the remarkable power they possess of securing the services of others. We say of some men that they have a remarkable power of organization. They succeed wonderfully in getting others to work with them. What is the secret of this success?

Not mere zeal; not mere activity (though these are included), but a combination of qualities deserving of careful study. Of these the following may be noted,— 1. A clear aim, and a firm will; the minister having a definite object which he can easily state and get others to understand, and holding firmly to it till it be attained. 2. Great readiness for personal labour, for a leader must not spare himself, but be forward in personal service. 3. Judgment and tact in finding out what other people are most fit for, and attaching them accordingly. 4. Elasticity and fertility of resource, capacity of adapting himself to circumstances. 5. Friendly interest in those whom he associates with him, a capacity to make common work a stepping-stone to mutual friendship, confidence, and affection. In a word, personal attractiveness and power to interest.

Further, the minister is not to deem it enough merely to announce from the pulpit the project he has on hand, and his reasons for taking it up. He must first of all try to talk freely on the subject in his ordinary and pastoral intercourse with his people, taking them as it were into his confidence, making them the partners of his aims and of his plans, and asking them to become his fellow-workers in carrying them into effect. And when the work is going on he must try to make it the occasion of developing a social feeling among the workers, of associating with it a sense of social enjoyment, and likewise a sense of spiritual benefit to themselves. It is not easy to exaggerate the benefit of such frankness in dealing with one's associates. Yet it must not be thought that it is impossible to go too far in the direction of communicativeness. There is also a certain *reserve* which it is

well for the minister to maintain. It is not easy to draw the line, but the example of our Lord indicates it. "Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you (John xv. 15). In this consisted our Lord's *frankness.* "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter" (John xiii. 7). "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now" (John xvi. 12). "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power" (Acts i. 7). *There* was our Lord's *reserve.* And it will be a happy thing for the minister if he too can strike this wonderful medium.

With every class of agents in congregational or parochial work, it is most important to have regular meetings for prayer, conference, and quickening of interest. It is not desirable that these should be very frequent, but it is quite essential that they should be extremely regular. At such meetings the minister may tell of what has been done, or of what is doing elsewhere in similar enterprises. Many is the wonderful narrative whose quickening effect time and space alike fail to impair. Works like *Praying and Working,* by Mr. Fleming Stevenson; *Six Months among the Charities of Europe,* by Mr. de Liefde; *The Book and its Mission,* by Mrs. Ranyard; *English Hearts and English Hands,* by Miss Marsh; *Haste to the Rescue,* by Mrs. Wightman; and *Ragged Homes and How to Mend them,* by Mrs. Bayly, are adapted for being most useful both to the minister and his people. Have we not also Mr. Tasker's *Territorial Visitor's Manual,* Dr. Hanna's *West Port*

chapter in the *Life of Dr. Chalmers,* Mr. Cochrane's *Mission Work,* and Mr. M'Coll's *Work in the Wynds?* And have we not in many successful missions practical exemplifications of the work that are most instructive and valuable? It is, moreover, desirable to have occasional, or perhaps periodical meetings *of the various classes of workers* in a congregation for social intercourse, and for addresses connected with the work. This tends to knit them together in brotherly bonds, to develop a spirit of interest and mutual affection, as well as to gather recruits from among the more willing and interested members of the congregation, who may be specially asked to be present on such occasions.

The remarks now made are applicable chiefly to congregations in large towns, and in the more populous districts elsewhere. To small flocks in the country districts they are applicable only in a very limited degree. It is one of the difficulties connected with small flocks —how is work to be found for exercising and developing the gifts and graces of the members? Some such work, however, there obviously is, and probably by conferring with friends and brethren interested in the subject the young minister will soon be able to settle what line it will be best for him to follow. It has sometimes been said sarcastically, that Christianity has been a failure. The sunken masses are pointed to in proof. If the Christian leaven were the right kind of leaven, it is said that it would leaven the whole lump. But the fault lies not with Christianity, but with Christians. There is need of a more active, diffusive, affectionate Christian spirit, not on the part of ministers only, but on the part of the whole body of the Christian people. At the present day the Holy Spirit seems to be pressing

this truth home, and calling on Christian men and women to act on it. It remains to be seen whether the Christian people are willing to be led forth to the enterprise; or whether, preferring carnal ease and indulgence, they will fall under the curse of Meroz, "who came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty" (Judges v. 23).

CHAPTER XIX.

RELATIONS OF THE MINISTER TO PUBLIC INTERESTS.

HITHERTO we have considered the minister almost exclusively in his relation to his own flock—first, as a preacher, and then as a pastor. But there is hardly any sphere, however remote or humble, in which the minister does not sustain some relation to a wider community. No small share of his influence, both with his flock and with the outer world, depends on the manner in which he acquits himself in this wider relation; and now that we have glanced at the leading topics that concern the inner pastoral circle, it may be well to advert to some of those that lie in the wider or more catholic sphere. We are now to consider the minister as a public man—a leading member of the general community—bound to take an interest in public institutions, and to endeavour to give a Christian tone and direction both to local and national procedure.

Two extremes present themselves here, between which, as in most similar cases, the true path will be found.

The one extreme is, when the minister is merely the pastor of his own flock, and takes no concern in anything beyond; the other, when he gets so overwhelmed with public engagements that he is unable to discharge

efficiently the duties of his own charge. In the one case he has too little public spirit; in the other too much. It is true, indeed, that the character of a man's gifts goes far to determine whether or not he ought to take much share in public business. Some men may be so cut out for the quiet pastoral walk, and so awkward and miserable on the platform, or in the committee-room, that no reasonable doubt can exist as to which is their proper sphere; while some, on the other hand, may have such shining gifts for public life as to make it a duty to take a large share of its burden, especially in difficult times, even though certain parts of pastoral work should suffer. But in truth every minister ought to concern himself in some way with the general cause of Christianity. It was not the high-priest only that had cause to tremble for the ark of God, when it was carried into battle with the Philistines, but every Levite, nay, every Israelite, throughout the country. For a minister to shut himself up within the limits of his congregation, and leave all the more general interests of Christianity to their fate, is to forget that he is not merely the minister of that congregation, but that he is also the servant of Him who declares that the field is the world. In ordinary service nothing is worse than for a servant having a special charge in one department, to take no interest in anything that concerns his master beyond it, and to neglect numberless opportunities of serving him, because they lie in spheres that have not been specially committed to him. There are important matters connected with the cause of Christ that from their nature cannot be specially committed to individuals; it therefore becomes every minister to consider whether he be not called to give his help in some of

them. No doubt, however, can be entertained, that when one is first planted in his charge, his first and main duty is to work actively there. It would be unreasonable to deny him the opportunity of forming his plans, and consolidating his arrangements there, before he should be called actively to other work. The most essential reputation for any minister to earn, is that of a faithful and laborious workman at home. The public will not be much disposed in his favour, if he come to the platform or the committee board apparently because he has a craving for work more exciting and more public than his own. The apostle's counsel to deacons is applicable, *mutatis mutandis*, to young ministers :— "They that have used the office of a deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree,—a good standing,—and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. iii. 13). It were a great mistake to suppose that a man's antecedents in his more pastoral sphere have no bearing upon his success on the platform or at the committee meeting. There is a secret disposition in his favour when he has acquired the character of a faithful and laborious minister, that gives weight to his counsels and force to his words. Public life is far more exposed than private to the influence of jealousies and cross currents of various kinds ; but nothing is more fitted to smooth such jealousies, and conciliate favour for one who ventures on the public arena, than the fact of his having already proved himself a laborious worker, as well as a pure-hearted, humble Christian, in his own proper sphere.

Of the more public relations which ministers have to sustain, we may notice, as the most important:—1. Relation to other denominations of Christians, and particularly to their ministers. 2. Relation to his own

brethren, especially in church courts. 3. Relation to public institutions and movements of various kinds, local and general, charitable, social, educational, or political. 4. Relation to public controversies, which may be agitating the community, or to matters of public morality. 5. Relation to literature and science, especially when these are much used in the interests of error, or in opposition to Christian truth.

1. *Relation to other denominations.*—Between two different if not opposite impulses, the conscientious minister may sometimes find himself in a difficulty. The instinct of neighbourliness will make him desire to be as friendly and as cordial as possible with ministers of other denominations; while the impulse of faithfulness may somewhat restrain him, under the feeling that he is appointed to witness for truths which his brethren are neglecting or are even perhaps violating, and that his testimony for these truths requires him to maintain in public an attitude of isolation from them. But it is not stating the case fully to affirm that he is appointed to witness for these truths. A barren testimony is like faith without works, a shrivelled, lifeless, useless thing. He is not less appointed to *commend* his principles, to endeavour to win the assent of others to them, so far as this can be done without concealment or compromise of their real nature. The question arises, Does a Christian man, and especially a Christian minister, best commend the truths which may be said to be committed to him, by maintaining an attitude of separation; or by showing a kindly and brotherly spirit towards ministers of other denominations, and co-operating with them so far as he can freely do so?

Whatever, theoretically, may be said in answer to this question, and whatever may be the state of feeling

in places overrun with prejudice, there can be little doubt that the Christian public and the public at large think better not only of the *man*, but of the *principles* of the man, who meets frankly with his brethren, where common action may be held, than of the man who stiffly retreats to a position of separation. Where there is frank and outspoken sincerity, and where a minister bears the character of a thorough and honest man, who holds no opinion without cause, and who is both able and ready to give an answer to every man that asks him concerning it, there is not only nothing lost by cordiality and affection, but much is gained. The public, and notably the Christian public, have no favour for quarrels or coldness among ministers. The points on which they differ usually appear less important to the general community than to those who differ over them. By a sort of instinct, bitterness of spirit and bitterness of speech are judged by the world to be unbecoming in Christian ministers. A minister whose life and character attest his earnestness, whose active interest in all that concerns the welfare of his own denomination attests his loyalty, and who scruples not to speak out boldly and strongly, but without bitterness, on suitable occasions, in support of the distinctive principles of his church, is much more likely to commend his church to the community than one who, to show how much regard he has for denominational principles, is distant, and perhaps bitter to his brethren. Affectionate cordiality, moreover, supported by consistent action, has a wonderful effect in conciliating the brethren themselves. It has been observed, times without number, that men who keep aloof have a tendency to imagine terrible evil of each other; but that commonly, when brought into friendly contact, they are surprised to find how often their prejudices

were unfounded, and how much they have in common. It is seldom that men *think* alike till they have learned to *feel* alike. Unions are commonly effected in the heart, before they are affirmed by the head. Undoubtedly, it is one of the most important yet difficult aims a minister can have, to keep his heart warm and flowing, when many things may be happening that are fitted to chill it. But little though it is often heeded, the 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians is pre-eminently a minister's chapter; and the Charity that is there enthroned so transcendently still reigns, queen of all the graces, and worthy to be coveted as the best of gifts.

2. *Relations to brother ministers.*—The nature of a minister's relations to the brethren of his own church must depend considerably on the nature of the district in which he is situated. If it be a thin rural district, the case will be widely different from that of a city locality. In general, however, it will be found, that while he sustains an obvious relation to all the brethren in his neighbourhood, he gets into closer and more social fellowship with a smaller number nearer him, perhaps, in locality, or in age, or more congenial in tastes and habits. In country districts, especially, ministers are pretty much thrown upon each other for society,—a circumstance that has both advantages and drawbacks. An unsocial and inhospitable minister, who shuns the society of his brethren, and indeed of his kind, is a misfortune, and gives too ready occasion to those who seek occasion against the servants of the Gospel. Where ministers are inclined to social fellowship with one another the disadvantage lies in their being so much alike, that they learn little of the actual world, with its tastes and tendencies, and are sometimes confirmed in prejudices and narrow views.

The more formal gatherings of ministers ought to conduce to the increase both of personal devotedness and of professional activity. Some plan should be fallen upon whereby iron may sharpen iron, and the servant of the Lord may leave the society of his brethren, not only with a heart refreshed by pleasant intercourse, but with all his activities quickened—with a more earnest desire to labour heartily in his work, and with a more clear perception of the way in which he should do so. In country districts, which, from their very nature, are more inclined to stagnation, where the work of the minister is more uniform, and therefore more likely to become monotonous, the value of such meetings of brethren can hardly be estimated. At such meetings the opportunity presents itself to take stock, as it were, of the wants of the whole district—to consider the prevailing tendencies, not only as to belief, but as to practice too; and to concert measures in common by which its spiritual health may be improved and its moral temperature elevated. It must be borne in mind that our Scottish system, rightly or wrongly, makes no provision for the episcopal superintendence of a district, otherwise than by the action of the united presbyters themselves. That which is everybody's business, we all know, is apt to be nobody's; and though it might not be becoming in a young minister to put himself prominently forward in the way of calling his brethren to new duties, or to unwonted enterprises, he cannot too soon begin to take a comprehensive view of the state of the whole district in which his lot is cast, or to consider the best means of providing for its necessities.

In regard to what is more properly the business of

church-courts—Presbyteries, Synods, and General Assemblies—it is obvious that the young minister must feel his way. It may be that he has no inclination for such work. The temptation then is to abstain from attending the meetings, and undoubtedly the temptation is considerable when one has other work in hand in which one feels that one may be of some use, while one has no such hope in attending meetings of church courts. Such a practice—the practice of staying away—may arise from one or other of two causes, either from the feeling that the business is in the hands of better qualified men, and will be better conducted by them; or from the feeling that the meetings are not conducted as they ought to be, and that absence is the most convenient way of testifying against them. But if the former be the view, some consideration ought to be had for the depressing effect on those who do grapple with the business, which the habitual or frequent absence of respected brethren must have; and if the latter be the view, it should be remembered that absence from meetings where one is understood to be present, and for whose procedure one is officially responsible, is a mode of dissent only to be justified when the circumstances are very extreme.

In connexion with our church-courts, there are certain duties which involve considerable labour, and there are other duties with which there is connected a certain amount of honour. It would be unbecoming in younger members to aspire to the latter without having been willing to take a fair share of the former. "*Juniores ad labores*" is a maxim from which there is no appeal; and not only is it in itself proper that work involving considerable physical exertion and mechanical labour should be cheerfully done by the younger

members, but it will be found that this is the real road to honour—the true way not only to influence, but to influence cordially acknowledged, and readily sustained by others. In point of fact, there is no royal road to influence in church-courts. The men who usually attain such influence are men who have taken no end of trouble—men who have come at the beginning of every meeting, and waited to the end—men who have plodded through weary details, and borne the heat and burden of many a laborious day. Even shining gifts for public speaking do not command this place of influence, unless they are associated with willingness to take trouble. It may be said that, if such be the case, there is little chance for any one gaining a conspicuous place, unless he have a physical constitution capable of enduring the longest and most wearisome meetings, and of returning early in the morning, after only half-a-night's rest, as fresh and vigorous as ever. And possibly this is not very far from the truth. But without entailing on men of ordinary, or of hardly ordinary, strength a duty which would amount pretty nearly to martyrdom, it may be undoubtedly affirmed that no man will readily command the confidence of an assembly, in urging any course of procedure, who has not taken a fair share of the more ordinary work—the drudgery, as it may be called by some, of ecclesiastical business. This is especially the case when a man stands up to object to some important course which his more active brethren have proposed. The objector may possibly begin by saying that he has not been a prominent member—in other words, that he has been a most irregular attender. The remark is a perilous one, for it is as likely to operate against him as for him. And in every instance care should be taken

not to assume an attitude of mere resistance. The lowest class of minds are capable of resisting, just as the most mischievous of men can place a log across the rails and upset a railway train. An attitude of mere opposition is essentially weak. Those who offer opposition to the plans of others are bound to produce better plans of their own, and to give some practical security that they shall be efficiently worked.

> "Si quid novisti rectius istis,
> Candidus imperti ; si non, his utere mecum."

3. *Relation to public institutions and movements.* In this department, as in the preceding, much will depend on the nature of the locality. Our institutions may be said, in theory at least, to be the results of applied Christianity—our civilisation is a Christian civilisation ; and there cannot but be much in the nature of these institutions, as well as in the way in which it may be proposed to carry them out, that is interesting and important in the eyes of the Christian minister. It is to be remarked, too, that public opinion has very explicitly connected the clergy with certain of our institutions, while with other things it is much more chary of letting them meddle, and from some it excludes them altogether. Education, the care of the poor, and the management of public charities, have hitherto been deemed appropriate to the clergy ; social and political movements are in a somewhat doubtful category ; while from financial, municipal, and parliamentary business they are wholly excluded. This decision of the public voice is one with which the clergy themselves have little cause to quarrel. The fact is, that in our larger communities, the conducting of public institutions and movements is not only work

that may be done by our Christian laymen, but it is the very work for which many of them are peculiarly adapted. To drag the clergy from the proper duties of a calling so laborious and extensive as theirs, to do work which our laymen are equally able to do, and which forms a wholesome occupation for their leisure hours, would be a singularly misdirected policy.

To such work, therefore, the clergy ought not ordinarily to consider themselves called, unless perhaps under two conditions. First, when in this way they get a door opened to extensive pastoral usefulness,—let us say, among the inmates of a hospital, or the children of a school; and second, when there is a peculiar call to put things as it were on the right Christian groove; when Christianity, instead of being exemplified, is outraged by some institution; or when social or political arrangements are adjusted not to the benefit, but to the destruction, of the best interests of men. No one, surely, would say that Dr. Andrew Thomson of St. George's did wrong in leaving the beaten tracks of the ministry, to denounce the iniquity of West India slavery; or that Dr. Chalmers did wrong in contending for a more Christian mode of providing for the poor than that of the poor-law system; or that Dr. Duncan of Ruthwell did wrong in establishing Savings Banks as a great encouragement to the habits of forethought and economy; or that Dr. Adam Thomson of Coldstream did wrong so far as he applied his energies to the abolition of the monopoly for printing the Bible; or that Dr. Guthrie did wrong in throwing his heart into the cause of Ragged Schools; or that those of us did wrong who strove to secure better houses and better days for working men. On the other hand, I question if Dr. Cartwright did right in turning his energies to

machinery, although he became the inventor of the power-loom; or Dr. Forsyth, though he invented the percussion cap; or Dr. Bell, though he invented the reaping machine. The difference between the two classes of cases is obvious. The one involves the application of some great law of Christianity for curing evils destructive of moral and religious habits; the other involves merely the application of a mechanical principle fitted to promote a temporal interest. We grant that whatever is fitted to promote human welfare has a certain character of sacredness, and may on that ground be counted not inappropriate in a minister; but regard must be had to its tendency to draw away his mind from the spiritual objects of the ministry, and tempt him, as a plain man once said, to make a by-job of his people's souls. Work which is merely useful, or merely benevolent, but not distinctively Christian, is not necessarily suitable employment for a minister.

On the other hand, it is suitable employment for a minister, from the pulpit, from the platform, or from the press, to show how Christianity has to do with all sorts of institutions, and to urge his people to carry it into effect in every relation of life. And here he must not be too timid. He must not avoid the very forms of unchristian activity that exist around him. He must call on masters and employers to be considerate of their servants, and servants to be conscientiously careful of the interests of their masters. He must be fearless in rebuking sin wherever it is in mischievous activity, and in trying to promote a holier state of society, a more truly Christian civilisation. He will have to lay his account with considerable ill-will and opposition; let him, on that account, make the more

sure of his ground, and study the more carefully that wonderfully useful rule of the kingdom, "Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."

4. *Relation to public controversies and questions.* Perhaps there is no department of his duty that demands more care and pains than this. Controversy, and emphatically religious controversy, invaluable though it is for quickening the faculties, and intensifying enthusiasm in favour of truth, seems to have a marvellous power to elicit the qualities of the old man. Even good men are singularly apt to be thrown off their guard, and to forget the necessity of guarding tongue and temper, heart and head, in the excitement of controversial warfare. The Psalmist's resolution to put a bridle on his lips while the wicked was before him needs to be remembered, but is too often forgot. Of all kinds of writing, the controversial affords the least satisfaction to the author in the retrospect, and probably the largest number of passages which, dying, he would wish to blot. The great temptation in controversy is to deal hard hits to opponents. Whether in our present fallen condition men will ever be able to discuss great religious questions in a thoroughly Christian spirit—whether they will ever attain the needful excitement of their controversial faculties, without a corresponding excitement of their keener passions—whether they will ever come to a pure and simple love of truth without love of victory, and a pure and simple hatred of error without hatred of opponents—are questions on which theory might lead us to one conclusion, while experience perhaps would force us to another. But surely there is room for a much more careful self-control than is commonly practised, and a much more earnest endeavour to do Christ's

controversial work in Christ's own spirit. For Christ *has* controversial work for his servants to do. And it is remarkable how much, amid the excitement and directly hostile influence of controversy, both personal and public religion have been advanced. So also, when a minister deems it his duty to attack some prevalent or popular vice. He may encounter no little opposition; but most likely, through God's blessing, he will be the means of so stirring the consciences of some of his hearers, even of those who are most angry at the time, that a great change for the better shall be the ultimate result.

5. *Relation to science and literature.* It is not reasonable to expect that all ministers shall be *savants*, or that every preacher shall be a *littérateur*. Much must be left to taste and natural ability, in the way of determining who shall specially devote themselves to these methods of serving the cause of Christ. The fact is that it is hardly possible for any man adequately to discharge the duties of an active ministry, and to be at the same time a man of science or of letters.

It was long ago seen clearly by Chalmers and others, that the perils arising to the interests of religion from literature and science could not be efficiently met except by the creation of situations in which Christian men would have leisure for such employment. The influence of science and literature at the present day on religious opinion and practice—the adverse influence, we may say, in many important quarters—is such that the Christian Church might well afford to encourage the efforts of any of her sons who were in any way competent to wield these weapons on the side of truth. Literature, now-a-days, is not the starving profession it was last century, when, even under favourable circum-

stances, authors could aspire little higher than to a garret in Grub Street. Men of letters, now-a-days, are not the threadbare adventurers that could only hope to make way in the world by attaching themselves, in dedications of the most obsequious flattery, to the chariot-wheels of some noble lord. The products of our intellectual chiefs are not now given to the world in quarto or folio volumes, in which streams of large print flow luxuriously through ample "meadows of margin." Quick and hot as sparks from the anvil, many of our ablest writers coin their thoughts into words, and the periodical press carries them, day by day, in tens of thousands of copies, to every important centre, and to every remote corner of the land.

No minister of the Gospel, interested in the cause of truth, and aware how subtle many of the influences are that obstruct it, can view this state of things with indifference. There is a great need at the present day of Christian writers of high ability, capable of commanding the ear of all classes and circles; and our people should be reminded that, in their prayers to the Lord of the Harvest, they ought to keep in view this department of the Master's service; all the more that there is no regular provision for training such men, and that even if there were, they are raised up, rather than trained up, and come to the Christian community as special gifts from God.

What is the best thing to be done for christianizing our literature and science at the present day, is undoubtedly a difficult problem. Those who make them the mere offshoots of their more serious labours, filling the *horæ subsecivæ* of an otherwise laborious life, can hardly expect to be of great service. Literature and science have now so many sons who give their whole

energies to them, that mere *dilettanti* contributors must hold a very secondary place. And it is well worth noticing that there is a great jealousy of such outsiders among the regular members of the profession. A man must have done some good, honest, laborious work in literature or science before his name will have weight, or his writings influence in these circles. When theologians, for example, who are not known to have done scientific work, come forward to criticise and blame the views of those who have, they are commonly dismissed rather contemptuously with the *ne sutor ultra crepidam* argument. There is no circle of savans where such a man as Livingstone will not be listened to with profound respect, just because he has been such a hard, fearless, self-denying worker. Both in literature and science there is a large amount of professional devotion to work, and many instances of self-denying zeal and earnestness in it; and when those who have only played a little at such pursuits come forward to do battle with such workers, they are met by an intense professional prejudice. If much is to be done in the way of christianizing literature and science, it must be by a class of Christian men who shall make the one or the other their proper vocation.

The first duty of the clergy to literature is to cultivate that of their own profession. If they do so effectually, they do a great service; a service, too, that may react on the general literature of the country, and secure for Christianity more respectful treatment there. It is also, doubtless, the duty of a minister to be in some degree familiar with the current literature and science of the day. If his sermons and conversation show utter ignorance of these things, it is little wonder if he excites the prejudices of those who are devoted to them.

Such men feel that he takes no interest in what is interesting to them, and a great gulf immediately separates them. But in fact no man who is ignorant of literature and science can know what is stirring in educated men's minds, or be able to adapt his message to them. It is a common belief among many classes of persons that in general the clergy know nothing of, and care nothing for, anything save what belongs to their own profession. They are counted guilty of ignorance and want of sympathy, and in many instances the charge may be just. But in those who have had a university training and the advantages of close contact with the best culture of their country, such ignorance and apathy are inexcusable.

Many examples show that ministers of active mind and habits may sometimes aid the cause of literature or of science without neglecting the proper duties of their sphere. Such men as the late Dr. James Hamilton or Dr. Tristram have done yeoman's service in this way. In the lighter departments of religious literature there is a wide field for able writers, provided they rise above that mediocrity which it is hard to condemn, yet impossible to encourage. The position of a successful author is much to be desired, enabling one to command an audience in all parts of the country, and to exercise an influence that ramifies in every direction. The toils of authorship, in such a profession as that of the ministry, are manifold and exhausting, but it is one of the great pleasures as well as surprises of life to learn that one has been useful to persons one has never seen, and thrown brightness into abodes of whose very existence one has never heard.

CHAPTER XX.

THE INFLUENCE OF CHARACTER.

Before concluding our view of the work of the ministry, and the qualifications for performing it, one great subject yet remains—the influence of personal character.

Character, as it is one of the most impalpable, so it is one of the most powerful moral forces in a well-conditioned society. Built up imperceptibly by slow degrees, as the coral reef is built up from the minute secretions of the coral insect, and ripening as quietly and steadily as the apple which day by day receives its fresh touch from the sunbeam, the character of a good man becomes a force as sure, and in a sense as irresistible, as that of gravitation. It is a force not to be attained by direct aim or effort, but as the indirect result of a course of life consistently followed from youth to old age. Every church and almost every district presents samples of such men, but probably it is in times of persecution that they become most conspicuous. Polycarp, in his extreme old age, going forth meekly to seal with his blood the testimony that he had borne so consistently to Christ, is the type of a noble army, of whom, as of Daniel, even their enemies have had to confess, that no fault could be found against

them, unless it were in the matter of their God. Chaucer, referring, as is commonly believed, to the reformer Wycliffe, drew a picture which Dryden amplified in another connexion :—

> "By preaching much, by practice more, he wrote
> A living sermon of the truths he taught."

Bunyan has drawn a similar portrait, with his usual skill,—"the picture of a very grave person hung up against the wall; and this was the fashion of it. It had eyes lifted up to heaven; the best of books in his hand; the law of truth was written on his lips; the world was behind his back. It stood as if it pleaded with men, and a crown of glory was over its head."

But though it is persecution chiefly that drags such men into fame, they are often to be found in ordinary times in the quiet retreats of country places, or in the less conspicuous congregations in towns. They are pillars of the Christian edifice, epistles of Christ, known and read of all men. It is not in the ministry alone that men of this type are to be found; old "David Deans" is the representative of the class in the ranks of the laity. People feel that the very presence of such men has all the effect of a sermon; and infidelity has sometimes to confess, that though it can find an answer to every other argument in favour of the Bible, it can find none to that which is derived from the lives of the men who have imbibed its spirit, and consistently followed its guidance.

It is a happy circumstance that this element of power does not depend on brilliant talents, lofty position, or even great professional skill. It is the crown which in the later years of his life the church assigns to the faithful minister, whose powers of oratory may not have been great, but who has quietly and consis-

tently done his duty, and shown unswerving allegiance to the principles which he has professed.

Consistency, indeed, reveals in one word the secret of weight of character. Conformity of the real to the ideal, unselfish and unworldly devotion to the great objects of the ministry, singleness of heart in serving the Master and seeking the good of the flock, are the great qualities which secure this distinction in the end. An elastic conscience, a left-handed devotion to the interests of the world, the manœuvres of Mr. Facing-Bothways, and the dodges of Mr. By-ends, are utterly fatal to it. A man of poor ability and almost childish simplicity is far more likely to secure it than the cleverest orator and most skilful diplomatist who cannot forget himself.

"A clergyman," says Bishop Burnet, "by his character and design of life, ought to be a man separated from the cares and concerns of this world, and dedicated to the study and meditation of divine matters, whose conversation ought to be a pattern for others; a constant preacher to his people, who ought to offer up the prayers of the people in their name and as their mouth to God; who ought to be praying and interceding for them in secret as well as officiating among them in public; who ought to be distributing among them the bread of life, the Word of God; and to be dispensing among them the sacred rites which are the badges, the union, and the support of Christians. . . . That he may perform all these duties with more advantage and better effect, he ought to behave himself so well that his own conversation may not only be without offence, but so exemplary that his people may have reason to conclude that he himself does firmly believe all those things which he proposes to them, that he

thinks himself bound to follow all those rules that he sets them, and that they may see such a serious spirit of devotion in him that from thence they may be induced to believe that his chief design among them is to do them good and to save their souls; which may prepare them so to esteem and love him that they may not be prejudiced against anything that he says or does in public by anything that they observe in himself in secret."[1]

It may be useful to notice in detail some of the elements on which weight of character depends.

1. In the apostolical enumeration of qualities necessary for a bishop, we find it laid down that he must be *grave*. The fitness of gravity in a minister will be evident to all who consider the special object of his office. That office, if we speak of it in general terms, is for urging on men a regard to the more serious and solemn aspects of life; and the man who has chosen this for his life-work ought surely himself habitually to exemplify the seriousness which he seeks to impress on others. If we describe the office more exactly, in its Christian aspect, it is for promoting peace between God and man through the sacrifice of the cross; and he who deals in so solemn a business ought to show himself habitually in sympathy with it. Unquestionably therefore, gravity or seriousness should lie at the foundation, as it were, of the character of a Christian minister. But it does not need to be unmitigated gravity. For when parties stand to one another in the close personal relation of a minister to his people, unmitigated gravity is rather a hindrance than a help. It has a kind of repulsive effect, especially upon the young. A little playfulness of manner in private has a wonderful opening effect; it softens the unapproachable solemnity with which the pulpit surrounds the

[1] Burnet's *Pastoral Care*, p. 2.

preacher, and establishes a more frank and cordial relation between him and his youthful hearers. The play of a harmless humour sometimes proves to be that "touch of nature, which makes the whole world kin." There is a medium path here between two extremes. At one extreme is an excess of frivolity. There are ministers who seem to think that as they are compelled to be grave in the pulpit, they may make up for that by unbounded levity in private. A professional propriety requires them to be serious in public, but to show that they are are not tied up by professional propriety, they take pleasure in throwing off all restraint and showing themselves elsewhere the most jovial of men. But there is a contradiction here which forfeits the esteem even of the worldly-minded. Such a course indicates a want of belief in those solemn truths which make the pulpit a place of such gravity. If the truths are real of which the Christian minister has charge, they not only demand of him a serious tone in the pulpit, but they demand a measure of habitual seriousness on all occasions and in all companies. It can never be right or becoming in one specially charged with the custody of these solemn truths to abandon himself to a frivolity which makes him the congenial companion of the most careless, unbelieving, and worldly. Even worldly men cannot in their hearts esteem the man who can lay aside his cloth, as the world's phrase is, as occasion may tempt him, and be as completely one of themselves as if there were no truth in his sermons, no reality in God's wrath against sin, and in the awful doom of the sinner.

For a similar reason, the minister who makes it his study to preserve a grim reserve and sombre demeanour on all occasions fails likewise to secure the respect he

might have. With such a man the gravity of the clerical character is considered to be an assumed not a real manner, a homage to the proprieties, instead of the product of a genuine feeling. It is not the artificial gravity into which a reverend pedant schools himself that is a real force in the world, but the gravity that results from *the true impression on himself* of those great truths with which it is his office to deal. And the minister whose habitual gravity is the result of real feeling is much less likely than the other to carry his gravity to a morbid pitch. He is much more likely to know the proper occasions for the play of lighter and more humorous feelings, and to give effect to his nature accordingly. He is more likely to know "the time to laugh" as well as "the time to weep." A real man, obeying real forces, and not merely artificial regulations, his very instincts will show him that man's nature was not designed to be constantly occupied with the most solemn and awful relations of things, and that there are occasions in Providence, as well as moods of nature, that seem to invite us to a rejoicing and jubilant, and even a merry outpouring of the soul.

"The parson," says George Herbert, "sometimes refresheth himself, as knowing that nature will not bear everlasting droopings, and that pleasantness of disposition is a great key to do good, not only because all men shun the company of perpetual severity, but also for that, when they are in company, instructions seasoned with pleasantness both enter sooner and root deeper. Wherefore he condescends to human frailties both in himself and in others, and intermingles some mirth in his discourses occasionally, according to the pulse of the hearer."[1]

[1] Herbert's *Priest to the Temple*, chap. xxvii.

The remark has often been made, that a vein of genuine humour is closely allied to true pathos. The orators that have most power to make men weep are often those who have also most power to make them laugh. The fountain of tears and the fountain of laughter lie close to each other. Men of such temperament have a great faculty of rapid transition from one mood to another. Almost at a bound they can pass from the lightest humour to the deepest pathos. So abrupt sometimes are these transitions that to men of ordinary temperament they appear irreverent. In many cases such a judgment would undoubtedly be harsh. Men of extraordinary mental elasticity are not to be judged by the standard of the slowest and stiffest natures. At the same time, even a vein of natural humour needs, in a minister of the Gospel especially, to be kept under control. The time is short, the solemn aspects of life are the decisive aspects; "it remaineth that they that weep be as though they wept not, and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not, ... for the fashion of this world passeth away" (1 Cor. vii. 30, 31).

There are other aspects of ministerial deportment that this word 'gravity' brings up. It suggests the question,—Ought a minister to be affable or reserved? Ought he to take elaborate care of his dignity, or leave his dignity to take care of itself? Ought he to mingle with society, or to hold himself aloof? Ought he to countenance recreations, and if so, what? Ought he to allow amusements to be carried on in his house, for the sake of his family and their friends, or ought his dwelling to exhibit a stern protest against all manner of worldly vanity, in literature, in dress, in amusements,—in everything, in short, of a lighter kind, that is sought after by the age?

Into these questions we cannot enter elaborately or exhaustively. They are, many of them, so much questions of detail, that specific rules cannot be laid down regarding them, and ministers must try to shape their course in each case according to the best judgment they can form of the particular circumstances. For the most part affability, or at least accessibility, is a desirable quality, for frankness encourages frankness, and the man who locks up all his own thoughts and feelings from the gaze of others as carefully and as rigidly as a jailor locks up a prison, is not very likely to get his people to throw open their hearts to him. Yet, on the other hand, it is not to be desired that a minister should throw everything open. It is not for edification that he should quite readily place himself on a footing of equality with all. People respect a minister all the more when he keeps his own place, and does not allow persons who are not his equals to assume a tone of equality. This can be done, and by genuine and real men, it is done without an artificial effort to maintain their dignity. The artificial effort to maintain dignity is commonly made by persons who lose the respect of the community by weak or foolish conduct, and try to save themselves from the effects of such conduct by falling back, on occasions, on what is due to the character of their office. But there is great force in the pithy observation that if a minister cannot command respect, he need not *demand* it. Respect is an unconscious homage; like the sensitive plant it shuts itself up when force is applied.

As to the question of mingling in general society, if it be a matter which the minister has it in his own power to determine, and not a question providentially foreclosed, we should say that the degree to which

society should be frequented must depend on the answers to such questions as these,—What amount of time have I to give to it? What effect does it produce on my spiritual and ministerial character—does it quicken me or hinder me? And further, am I able to *hold my own* in society, or am I swept down by the current? Am I able to vindicate my views, to tell men their duty, to speak a word in season as an ambassador of Christ, or is the worldly stream that flows on such occasions too strong for me, too strong for my powers of conversation, and too strong for my courage and my faith? Duties of a determinate character are not to be shirked through a sense of weakness, but are to be courageously undertaken in reliance on the strength that is made perfect in weakness; but duties of an indeterminate character are not to be placed in the same category, and a minister of the Gospel who feels that he cannot hold his ground in general society, and that he is under no obligation to frequent it, will do well to appear but seldom on such occasions.

In regard to *recreations*, the rule to be followed will probably depend on the question whether or not the prevalent feeling in regard to them is wholesome or morbid *in its degree*. In our own day, the feeling in favour of certain amusements has become so strong, that many ministers, who have no ascetical tendencies, are feeling it their duty to try to modify it. Intense devotion to such things seems to them to interfere with those habits of self-control, and devotion to duty, which are essential for the Christian life, and to which it is eminently salutary to train the young. And in regard to the families of ministers, while care should be taken not to bind by rules so strict as to produce reaction, it is reasonable that in some degree they should visibly

share in that separation from the world to which the head of the house, by his very office, has devoted himself. If the members of the family do not heartily sympathize in this with its head, it is difficult, or rather impossible, to get the spirit of the household such as is desirable. But it is a blessed household in which all are of one heart and soul in their attachment to the Lord and to his work; and when the tone of holy cheerfulness by which all are pervaded proclaims to the world that where Christian love has its reign, and where there is pleasure in serving God and in doing good to man, life does not need all kinds of artificial excitements, and that the sweetest enjoyment is inseparably connected with the highest duty. "Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness, *therefore* God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows" (Psalm xlv. 7).

2. Another most important element in weight of character is *openness and straightforwardness.* For there is nothing more hurtful to the growth of character than the practice, even the suspicion, of duplicity or fraud. Men in any rank of life who try to compass their ends by duplicity or diplomacy may be very able men, and may be highly successful in their immediate objects, but such a course is never compatible with the attainment of great weight of character. In the life of a minister it is pre-eminently true that honesty is the best policy. The duty of aiming at honesty and straightforwardness is the more to be kept in view by men of facile nature or of obliging spirit, who often yield to the temptation to avoid contradicting or hurting the feelings of those with whom they come into contact. They may be brought into fellowship with men of various and even of opposite opinions, but in

consequence of this easiness of mind they may leave the impression that they do not differ very much from any of them, to the great damage of their own character for straightforwardness and honesty.

It follows that to enable the minister to be straightforward, it is of vast importance that he be decided. It may be hard to press this counsel on men of naturally vacillating temperament. But it is precisely men of such temperament that have need to lay it to heart. In any position, a vacillating man is feeble and unsatisfactory. But a vacillating leader is a positive calamity. The minister of the Gospel is the leader of his congregation, and for him to vacillate, in any great question, is practically to bring the army to a stand-still, almost to proclaim the reign of anarchy. On great questions, it is his duty to have his mind made up. And on all questions which concern him and his flock, it is his duty to aim at distinct opinions, opinions based on the great leading convictions which he has been led to hold. Thus he shall be able at once to state his opinion and to give his reason for holding it. The reason thus given being manifestly in accord with the great guiding principles of his life, will command respect, if not concurrence. Strength and decision of opinion, too, facilitate frankness of expression, whereas feebleness of impression makes one utter one's-self as if one were ashamed of one's views. With the greatest possible respect for the qualities of our own countrymen, we should nevertheless say, that in this quality of decision and frankness of utterance, the average Scotchman is not equal to the average Englishman. The Englishman is more in the way of speaking out clearly and boldly, even when he differs from you, and is better able to state his views in those frank and honest

tones which prevent his opposition from becoming offensive.

Nor does this decisiveness of opinion and character necessarily imply bigotry. Bigots there no doubt are among those who are most decided and outspoken: but there is nothing in such decision and frankness to prevent one from feeling kindly, and from judging charitably in the case of those who are on the other side.

But while we thus speak of the advantage of frankness in uttering one's views, as well as of having clear and decided views to utter, let us remember that the basis of all that is truly valuable in this habit is a moral basis. It is that attribute which God especially demands—"truth in the inward parts" (Psalm li. 6). It is only when there is inward sincerity that there can be any reality in a seemingly transparent manner. And that inward sincerity must ever be implored as the gift of God, and habitually nursed and cherished, with the profoundest sense of its value. For guile in the heart, as it is the ugliest blot, and the most destructive cancer in any man's character, so it is peculiarly offensive and peculiarly ruinous in the character of a minister of Christ. Of all functionaries, an ambassador should be open and honest. Of all ambassadors, the ambassador of Christ should be true and real. The whole Bible, but especially the New Testament, makes war on guile. "Laying aside all malice, and all guile and hypocrisies . . . as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word" (1 Peter ii. 1, 2). "Christ once suffered for us, leaving us an example . . . who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (1 Peter iii. 21, 22). One of the first of those whom Christ called to follow him was Nathanael, "an Israelite indeed, in whom was no guile" (John i. 47). Guileless-

ness is the characteristic of childhood, but not to be put away when you put away childish things. It is one of the noblest attributes of manhood. Never does man appear so great as when a great intellect and a large heart are allied to the transparent and guileless nature of a little child. And never does the Christian minister come so near to the ideal of his Master, as when his whole life, and his whole teaching, are a faithful transcript of his own soul.

3. A third element of weight of character is a *patient, calm, reasonable temper.* It is an unhappy thing when a minister is prone to take offence, or when his temper is easily excited by any cause. It is, indeed, quite unworthy of a Christian minister to take offence at all, or even to appear to notice little things that in the world are counted offensive—little breaches of etiquette, want of proper consideration for him or his, inattention to the formalities of society. There is no attitude in which a respectable man appears so little, as when he is trying to prove that he has not been treated with due consideration. Our Lord struck at this foolish foible in instructing his disciples, when they were bidden to a feast, not to mind though they should occupy the lowest place. And whatever may be the effect for the moment, a Christian minister who gives no heed to such matters will be sure ultimately to stand higher than one who fights for his place as for life itself. Even where wrong has manifestly been done to him, the minister should far rather forgive and forget, than cherish a grudge, or manifest coldness. On him especially lies the force of the exhortation, "As much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." On him pre-eminently it is incumbent to show that Christianity supplies for the tear and wear of

daily life a nobler fund of forbearance than does the natural heart. Let him be patient, too, and reasonable, when called to deal with the delinquencies of his people. I can never forget the words of an employer in the West of Scotland, when explaining the principles on which he dealt with his men, and through which he had been enabled in a large degree to secure their regard and affection—among other things, "I make it a point," he said, "when anything has been done wrong, not to scold the workman until he has had an opportunity of giving an explanation, for I find that after such explanation any remonstrance falls with much more weight, especially when it is conveyed in a mild and reasonable manner." It seemed to me that there was a lesson here for all sorts of persons in authority. The calm and patient spirit that habitually restrained itself, when there was great apparent provocation, is a model for the Christian minister. This spirit reposes on a deep sense of justice on the one hand, and a powerful self-control on the other. It knows how liable men are to be unjust who trust themselves to express their feelings in the first moments of provocation, and how precious in such circumstances is the power of restraint. The minister of the gospel must ever aim at being a peacemaker, a healer of strife, a sweetener of the breath of society, a zealous promoter of glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, goodwill toward men. Against one very common form of mischief-making he will set himself with the most rigid determination. I mean the habit of retailing gossip, or opening one's ears to scandal. There is no habit that, especially in small communities, is so hurtful to the Christian spirit. There is nothing more likely to do harm than for a minister to listen to the retailers of

scandal, either personally, or by the instrumentality of those who have an inclination towards it. Against every such tendency, the utmost vigilance is called for. If he needs to know the character of his people, let it be from those who have no motive and no pleasure in bringing down the character of their neighbours.

4. We must add a single sentence on the great importance of habits of *punctuality, accuracy, and exactness.*

A minister needs to be exact in his *statements.* For it is both awkward and injurious to his character, when, by any exaggeration or colouring, he affords any handle for a charge of untruthfulness.

Further, he needs to be very mindful of his *promises* —very careful not to promise unless he distinctly sees his way to perform, and deeply impressed with this, that though, through the very multiplicity of his duties, he may forget to pay a visit or to write a letter he has promised—the person to whom the promise was made is sure to remember it, and very likely to take a serious view of the omission.

A minister needs to be exact in *money matters.* In the great majority of cases, he is subject to considerable financial pressure, and the effort to keep all straight,— the effort to maintain a position for which the means are barely adequate, involves a self-denial spread over the greater part of his life, that forms an important discipline, and that often amounts to real heroism. Without such vigilance and care, the battle becomes too trying, and once the financial balance is lost it is almost hopeless to recover it. The cases are very numerous of embarrassment contracted at the commencement of public life, when there is necessarily considerable outlay, and when the young minister is

probably ignorant at once of the expenses of his establishment and the practical limits of his income,—embarrassment that has pressed like a millstone during all the rest of his career. The matter is all the more trying that in many districts the minister's lot is cast among those who, not comprehending his difficulty, are little likely to help him either with sympathy or material aid.

Let me only add further under this head, that a habit of business-like punctuality in all matters, great and small, is invaluable to a minister. Let him make a point of being in time for every engagement. Let him never leave the answering of a letter, which ought to be acknowledged at once, to a more convenient opportunity, even though it should be a mere invitation, or allow minutes of meetings, or records of accounts, if he has to do with such, to fall into neglect or arrear. Such matters, little though they seem to many, have an important bearing on character, and may be placed in the category of the minor morals. Exactness in them, if not made matter for a fussy and pedantic display, raises a minister in public estimation, and adds weight to his counsels when he urges his people, like the apostle, "to exercise themselves to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man."

Let it be observed, too, that perfection in punctuality is a duty which is almost ever attainable where it is sought. There are services and duties without number where we cannot be perfect; where in many cases we are wofully imperfect; depending on states of mind and heart which we cannot reach, or which we fail to reach, and in reference to all of which we have constant need to make the confession that we are unprofitable

servants. But punctuality is not one of these. There, if we take pains, we may do all that has to be done. And let us not despise it because it is little: for he that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.

5. Perhaps we ought to add a remark on the importance of a certain *refinement of manner*—meaning by this, that which is the result of refinement of mind. For though manner in itself may be but of lesser importance, and though manner, as manner, and fine manners, as fine manners, are very contemptible, yet a certain culture of the outer man is unquestionably a fitting result of that long process of culture, both intellectual and spiritual, through which the ministers of our Church have to pass. Undoubtedly this is necessary to enable a minister of the gospel to attain the full measure of efficiency, in contact with the more cultivated sections of the community. It is a pity that he should be exposed to disparaging remarks on that score, when the cause for such disparagement might be so easily removed. A great force of spirituality will indeed overbear everything, and undoubtedly it is that which is most desired. The true gentleman is not the disciple of Lord Chesterfield, devoted to artificial rules and fashion; he is the man of refined sympathies, whose soul inspires him with a true refinement, and makes him alert to avoid those little roughnesses of speech or manner, or those little negligences in dress or appearance which create a prejudice against him and his message.

"The parson's yea is yea," says George Herbert, "and nay, nay: and his apparel plain, but reverend and clean, without spots, or dust, or smell; the purity

of the mind breaking out, and dilating itself even to his body, clothes, and habitation."[1]

6. But matters such as have now been referred to are small indeed compared to the importance of maintaining, earnestly and diligently, the *habits of the inner life.* The watching of the state of his own soul, the guarding against declension and decay, the keeping of a keen edge on the conscience, and the maintaining of a close and real fellowship with God; the trimming of the lamp of faith, the strengthening of the things that are ready to perish, the quickening of zeal, the stimulation of all the Christian graces—if such things are not duly minded, alas for the spiritual efficiency of the ministry! For public bustle and ecclesiastical activity will never make up for the want of personal fellowship with God, and personal appropriation of the blessings of heaven. No minister can be right who does not look on the time spent in personal devotion as the most important part of the day, giving a complexion to all the rest, and determining whether or not any saving good may be expected to result from his other employments. The Bible read with a direct and deliberate application to himself; the mind solemnly exercised in meditation on his state, and in prayer to God for the corresponding blessings; the whole work of each day spread out before God, and his guidance and blessing earnestly sought upon it—without such exercises, the ministry can be little else than a solemn form. In addition to the devout reading of the Scriptures, many earnest ministers find it of great benefit to read a portion of some spiritual book, one of the fragrant old authors perhaps, and to add to this the perusal of some good biography, and perhaps a hymn-

[1] Herbert's *Priest to the Temple,* chap. iii.

book. Nor ought the practice which was so strongly recommended by Dr. Chalmers, and from which he himself derived so much benefit, to be forgot. Once a month, while engaged in the active duties of the ministry, he set apart a portion of a day for a more deliberate and full exercise of devotion. He began by asking a blessing on the exercise. He read a suitable portion or portions of Scripture.

"*June* 1*st*.—Rose at eight; spent the forenoon in devotion, of which the following is the record:—Invocation for God's blessing and direction on the exercise. . . . Read the promises to prayer, and prayed for acceptance through Jesus Christ, and general sanctification. . . . Prayed for knowledge, for the understanding and impression and remembrance of God's Word; for growth in grace, for personal holiness, for that sanctification which the redeemed undergo. Thought of the sins that most easily beset me; confessed them, and prayed for correction and deliverance. They are—anxiety about worldly matters, when any suspicion or uncertainty attaches to them; a disposition to brood over provocations; impatience at the irksome peculiarities of others; an industriousness from a mere principle of animal activity, without the glory of God and the service of mankind lying at the bottom of it; and, above all, a taste and an appetite for human applause. My conscience smote me on the subject of pulpit exhibitions. I pray that God may make usefulness the grand principle of my appearances there. Read the promises annexed to faithful ministers, and prayed for zeal, diligence, and ability in the discharge of my ministerial office. Prayed for the people, individually for some, and generally for all descriptions of them. Prayed for friends individually, and relations. Read the pro-

mises relative to the progress of the Gospel and conversion of the Jews. Prayed for those objects." [1]

It is difficult to say which part of the process is more to be admired—the humble earnestness with which he sought for himself to be made a vessel meet for the Master's use, or the affectionate concern which he felt for those for whom individually he pleaded before the Throne. While every earnest minister will constantly pray for his flock as a whole, and for the classes of which it is composed, it is in pleading for individuals that he will become most intense, and get nearest to God. Nothing helps us or our people more than to make them individually the objects of supplication. From one to four or five taken daily, will enable the minister in the course of a year to overtake his whole flock, whether it be larger or smaller. What a vast element of power will thus be added to his ministry!

It was not the splendour of his talents alone that made Chalmers the man of power that he was. A great part of his marvellous strength was got by the common process. Like Jacob, he wrestled with God, and he became a prince. The humblest student, if he will but trace his footsteps to the throne of grace, may obtain a measure of his blessing and of his power. There is a sense in which, in the kingdom of God, to be weak is to be strong; to be empty is to be full; to be poor is to be rich; to have nothing is to possess all things.

[1] *Memoirs of Dr. Chalmers*, vol. i. p. 288.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

HOMILETICAL AND PASTORAL LITERATURE.

CHRYSOSTOM—Περὶ Ἱερόσυνης—*Of the Priesthood.*—This celebrated treatise of the great Greek orator was written in his youth, and is in the form of a dialogue between himself and his friend Basil, afterwards Bishop of Raphanea, in Syria. Both of them had been called to be presbyters, and it seemed as if both were going to accept; but Chrysostom hid himself when the time came, and Basil was ordained alone. The Dialogue is partly an apology for himself, and partly an exhortation to his friend. The great subject of the treatise is, the dignity and elevation of the Christian priesthood, and the high qualifications needed for it. If Christ said to Peter, Lovest thou me? what tender and fervent love, both to Christ and to his Church, a priest ought to feel in himself, before he entered on the duty of feeding the sheep of God, which he had purchased with his own blood! Chrysostom magnifies the office in the highest possible degree, and pleads that the very best and ablest men are needed for it, men like King Saul, taller than their fellows by head and shoulders. In thus exalting the office, he unquestionably gives it a priestly tinge—the Christian priest is far higher than the Levitical, and the offering of the one had no glory by reason of the surpassing glory of the other. "For when you see the Lord slain, and lying, and the priest standing over the sacrifice, and praying, and all washed with that precious blood, can you think you are yet among men, or that you are standing on the earth? Do you not rather seem to have been carried off to heaven,

and having cast away all that is earthly, to be gazing upon heavenly things with a pure, naked soul? Oh, what a miracle! Oh, what goodness of God! He that sits on high with the Father, is held at that hour by the hands of all, and gives himself to those wishing to receive and embrace him!" The same thing is argued from the power of binding and loosing. The Father hath committed all judgment to the Son, and the Son hath committed it to the priests. "It is madness to despise such government, without which we can obtain neither salvation nor the good things promised; for if no one can enter the kingdom unless he be regenerated of water and the Spirit, and as he that eateth not the Lord's flesh and drinketh not his blood, is deprived of eternal life, and as all these things are performed by no other hands than the priest's, how can it happen that without their aid any one can either escape the fire of hell, or attain the crown laid up in heaven?" Such high-priestly doctrine shows how little to be trusted even Chrysostom was on the power of the ministry. But the earnestness with which he urges purity on the priest is most impressive, and his burning words can hardly be read without setting one's spirit aglow. "It behoves his soul to shine out in beauty, so that it may both delight and enlighten the minds of the beholders. The offences of ordinary men, as though committed in the dark, destroy the perpetrators only; but the wickedness of one who is conspicuous and well known, brings a common injury upon all; all measure the sin, not by the enormity of the deed, but by the rank of the offender. It is requisite that the priest should be surrounded on all sides by adamantine arms, with exceeding cautiousness and perpetual watching on his lip, lest any, finding a naked and unguarded spot, should inflict a blow; for all stand around prepared to wound and overthrow, and these not only enemies and open foes, but many professing friendship; as he proclaims heavenly messages, they watch for his halting, for of him they expect extraordinary purity." In the latter part of his treatise, Chrysostom dwells on the advantages of learning and speaking power, and gives useful counsels on the subject of popularity.

The last part dwells on the penalties of unfaithful service, and in his intense enthusiasm, the orator again gets on perilous ground, exalting the office of those who are to pray both for the living and the dead, and who offer that mysterious sacrifice at the celebration of which he himself had seen angels present. With all the faults of this treatise, nothing can exceed the earnestness with which it urges the Christian minister to seek after the highest spiritual, moral, and intellectual qualifications for an office higher than any other filled by the sons of men.

AUGUSTINE—*De Doctrinâ Christianâ*, Liber IV.—The first three books of this treatise are designed to point out how the Scriptures are to be understood; the fourth, how their contents are to be conveyed to others. There is a fine balance and completeness in the views of Augustine on this subject. The first requisite doubtless is to possess the true knowledge, and it is better to utter the true knowledge without art, than what is untrue with art. Still it is useful to combine the two. This is done in the Holy Scriptures, where there is much true eloquence as well as divine knowledge. Specimens of Scriptural eloquence are given. Three different kinds of style are to be employed, according to the nature of the subject—the *submissa*, the *temperata*, and the *grandis*. Specimens of these are brought forward from the Scriptures, and also from Cyprian and Ambrose. Eloquence has for its aim to move the feelings. He shows how he himself succeeded in dissuading the people of Cæsarea in Mauritania, from continuing the barbarous custom of a three days' fight among one another, to which they had been long accustomed, and in which many used to be slain. He adopted the *grande loquendi genus*, and the people applauded his eloquence vehemently; but it was not when he heard them applauding, but when he saw them weeping, that he felt he had conquered. More important than anything else is the life of the preacher—rules of art are nothing to that. In the course of the treatise, and again at the close, Augustine very earnestly urges prayer for God's blessing. The preacher is

ever to ask his sermon from God. The hour before he preaches, he is to ask that God would help him to pour out what he has got, for the good of souls. It is seldom that one finds such a combination of good sense and burning feeling as in this admirable little treatise.

AUGUSTINE—*De Catechizandis Rudibus.*—This treatise contains instructions to a young deacon at Carthage as to the mode of dealing with the ignorant,—persons recently brought from paganism to Christianity. He encourages the young man, who was rather desponding about himself, by telling him that sometimes the sermons of which the preacher thought least were the best. The catechumen was to be fully instructed in the historical facts of the Bible—many of which Augustine rehearses. Out of these the great lessons regarding Christ, and divine love, were ever to be taught. Counsels are given to the catechumen to abandon the society of the world, and join that of the Church, with reasons why he should do so. Hints are thrown out as to the line to be adopted by the preacher in dealing with persons of education, when they came to be instructed. Augustine is very earnest in recommending liveliness in the mode of instruction, and he goes at very great length into an enumeration of the chief causes of that weariness which was apt to be felt, and the remedies for them all. He concludes by giving two samples of catechetical discourses—one long, the other short. These catechetical discourses are not in the form of question and answer; but we know that those to whom they were addressed were examined on them. Catechetical instruction had an important place in the early Church.

CYRIL OF JERUSALEM—*Eighteen Books of Catechetical Discourses.*—These contain, first, preliminary exhortations; then discourses on Repentance, Baptism, Christian Doctrine, Faith, the Birth, Death, Resurrection, and Second Coming of Christ, and the like. As doctrinal treatises, these discourses are of very little value; but they contain some fine bursts of eloquence, and some very powerful practical exhortations.

GREGORY NAZIANZEN—*Λόγος ἀπολόγητικος, τῆς φυγῆς ἕνεκεν—Oratio Apologetica pro Fugâ.*—Several of the discourses of this Father relate to the office of the ministry. After being ordained a presbyter by his father, who was Bishop of Nazianzum, he fled to the desert, under a consciousness of his unfitness. In vindication, he composed his *Apologetical Oration.* He expresses himself shocked by the carelessness with which so many assumed the pastoral office, comparing himself to Peter, who was at once attracted towards it and shrank from it—"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Referring to passages in the prophets denouncing the priests and shepherds of Israel, and to our Lord's denunciations of the scribes and Pharisees, he says, "These thoughts possess me night and day: they eat out my very strength and substance; they so afflict and deject me, and give me so terrible a prospect of the judgments of God, which they are drawing down on the Church, that instead of daring to undertake any part of the government of it, I can only think how to cleanse my own soul, and fly from the wrath to come, and cannot think that, being so young, I am meet to handle the holy things." A "Discourse on the Importance of the Priesthood" expresses similar views, and dwells on the necessity of the priest knowing how differently to treat men and women, married and unmarried, cheerful and melancholy, educated and uneducated. Gregory was one of those who are rightly affected by a sense of their own unfitness, without having a sufficiently lively trust in the promise—"My grace is sufficient for thee."

JEROME—*Epistle to Nepotian.*—The term "clericus" or clerk, which signifies a lot or portion, imports either that the clergy are God's portion, or that God is theirs, and that therefore they ought to possess God, and be possessed of Him. This portion ought to satisfy them. They must not seek after gain. They must not fawn on rich women, and get legacies left them. The priest must be diligent in the study of the Scriptures. In preaching he should study to draw groans rather than applause, and count tears the best

commendation of his sermon. He must care for the poor, and by every means avoid the scandal of the age, the luxurious living of the clergy. He must govern his tongue with great care—even listening to scandal was wrong. He ought to visit his people; but not to report in one place what he saw in another. He should visit them in their adversity rather than their prosperity, and not go often to their feasts. Jerome concludes by protesting that he made no personal allusions; but if any one found the cap fit, he might put it on—it would be a proof that he was guilty.

ST. BERNARD—*Tractatus de Moribus et Officio Episcoporum* (12th century).—A very good treatise for the time; designed to rebuke the worldliness, luxury, and other sins, of which the bishops were so guilty, and to promote humility, heavenliness, self-denial, charity. Another treatise, *Ad Clericos*, with the title *De Conversione*, seeks to show what real conversion was,—so different from the caricature of it, then so common *inter clericos*.

GUIBERT DE NOGENT, an abbot, who died in 1124, left behind him a treatise on the proper method of making a sermon. WILLIAM, Archbishop of Paris, wrote a book called *Rhetorica Divina*. HUMBERT DE ROMANIS, a general of the order of St. Dominic, wrote a treatise on the *Institution of Religious Preachers*. JOHN REUCHLIN, in 1500, wrote *Liber Congestorum de arte Prædicandi*, which was well received. PHILIP MELANCHTHON published *Ratio Brevis Sacrarum Concionum Tractandarum*. ERASMUS, in 1535, wrote *Ecclesiastes, sive Concionator Evangelicus*. BORROMEO, Bishop of Milan, in 1580, *De Instructione Predicatoris*. CHEMNITZ, in 1583, *Methodus Concionandi*. See notices of some of these and other treatises in Appendix to Kidder's *Homiletics*, pp. 329-331.

BISHOP PERKINS—*The Art of Prophesying* (1617). [A treatise on the only true manner and method of preaching.] —The second title is in the table of contents, but does not describe the treatise properly. The first and chief

part is exegetical, showing how Scripture is to be expounded and applied; the last two chapters are on preaching, but very brief; one being on memory, which the author does not confide much in, deeming it better before preaching to commit thoughts to the heart than words to the memory; the other on two things requisite for uttering a sermon—human wisdom and the Holy Spirit, the former needing to be concealed, the latter to be demonstrated or shown. Bishop Perkins was the author of an elaborate work on *Cases of Conscience.*

Richard Baxter—*Gildas Salvianus; The Reformed Pastor, showing the nature of the Pastoral Work, especially in Private Instruction and Catechising* (1656).—This work was begun as a sermon to be preached at a meeting of brethren for humiliation and prayer, December 4, 1655, but Baxter was unable to be present at the meeting. In printing his observations, in place of a discourse he produced a volume. The text is from Acts xx. 28, "Take heed, therefore, to yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." In urging his brethren first to take heed to themselves, he addresses them with all his characteristic plainness, urgency, and fervour. Then he unfolds their duty to the flock—the *object* of it, the flock, as a whole and as individuals, converted and unconverted, the young, the weak, decliners, the disconsolate, the strong, etc.,—the *work* itself, preaching, sacraments, prayer, oversight of the members,—public discipline and reproof,—the *manner* of the work, all for God, laboriously, prudently, tenderly, lovingly, etc.; and then follows an elaborate application, in which he very specially enlarges on the duty of *personal dealing* with the members of the flock. This he urges with the utmost earnestness—dwelling especially on the sinfulness of neglecting it, of which sin he specifies twenty aggravations. He gives directions for the right management of it, and how to bring the people to it. The last part of his book contains directions how to deal with self-conceited opinionists, and with those of

whose condition we are between fear and hope; with directions to prevent or cure error and schism.

Baxter was led to dwell on this subject thus fully and confidently by the remarkable success which attended his own ministry at Kidderminster. A full account of his pastoral methods, and especially his catechising, is to be found in the "Narration of the most remarkable passages in his Life and Times." In his catechisings, he allowed none but the family to be present, in case they should be restrained by bashfulness. "I first heard them recite the words of the Catechism, and then examined them about the sense, and lastly urged them, with all possible engaging reason and vehemency to answerable affection and practice. If any of them were stalled through ignorance or bashfulness, I forbore to press them any further to answers, but made them hearers; and either examined others, or turned all into instruction and exhortation. . . . When I set upon personal conference with each family, and catechising them, there were very few families in all the town that refused to come, and these few were beggars at the town's ends, who were so ignorant they were ashamed it should be manifest. And few families went from me without some tears, or seemingly serious promises for a godly life."

George Herbert—*A Priest to the Temple: or, The Country Parson, his Character and Rule of Holy Life.*—When settled at Bemerton, Herbert drew out for his own guidance, in a beautifully quaint and quiet, saintly dialect, rules touching

The Parson's Life.
The Parson's Knowledge.
The Parson Praying.
The Parson Preaching.
The Parson on Sundays.
The Parson's Charity.
The Parson in his House.
The Parson Comforting.
The Parson Arguing.
The Parson Catechising.
The Parson in his Journey.
The Parson in Mirth.
The Parson in Contempt.
The Parson's Library.
The Parson Blessing.
(*And sundry other points.*)

Barring a little ascetic and High-Church flavour, it is a most delightful and instructive book. Izaac Walton says in his Life of George Herbert: "I have now brought him

to the parsonage of Bemerton, and to the thirty-sixth year of his age, and must stop here, and bespeak the reader to prepare for an almost incredible story, of the great sanctity of the short remainder of his holy life; a life so full of charity, humility, and all Christian virtues, that it deserves the eloquency of St. Chrysostom to commend and declare it; a life that, if it were related by a pen like his, there would then be no need for this age to look back into times past for the examples of primitive piety, for they might be all found in the life of George Herbert."

Gilbert Burnet, D.D., Bishop of Salisbury.—*A Discourse of the Pastoral Care* (1692).—The author was almost heart-broken by the ignorance and incapacity of many that came to him for ordination, and grievously distressed at the generally low condition of vital godliness, and at the handle given to the rising unbelief of the age by the carelessness of many clergymen. Hence his treatise, a great part of which is naturally taken up with an exposition of the true idea of the office, as set forth in Scripture, and as asserted by the Ancient Church. The canons of the Church, and the views of the Church of England in reference to the ministry, are fully dwelt on. Proceeding to consider the proper training for the pastoral office, he divides it into two: the training of the heart and soul, and instruction in the various parts of the duty. He urges very fully and very earnestly the exercises which, with God's blessing, train the soul to the due temper of Christ's holy service, and enable a man warrantably to express his "trust that he is inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to undertake the office." On the intellectual training he is much shorter, but recommends a number of books much in repute in his day. As for the duties of the ministry, the pastor is to study the Scriptures, chiefly the Psalms and New Testament, so thoroughly as to be able to explain them without book. He is to take great pains to instruct the young; to catechise; to explain to the people baptism and the Lord's Supper; to admonish offenders; to visit the sick; to deal with those troubled in mind;

and frequently visit his parish from house to house. "In these visits much time is not to be spent; a short word for stirring them up to mind their souls, to make conscience of their ways, and to pray earnestly to God, may begin them, and almost end them." "This, I know, will seem a vast labour, especially in town, where parishes are large; but that is no excuse for those in the country, where they are generally small; and if they are larger, the going of this round will be the longer a-doing; yet an hour a day twice or thrice a week is no hard duty; and this in the compass of a year will go a great way, even in a large parish." A chapter is specially devoted to preaching. "The shorter sermons are, they are generally both better heard and better remembered. . . . In half an hour a man may lay open his matter in its full extent. . . . As to the style, sermons ought to be very plain. The words in a sermon must be simple and in common use; not savouring of the schools, nor above the understanding of the people. . . . In the delivering of sermons . . . the great rule which the masters of rhetoric press much can never be well enough remembered; that to make a man speak well, and pronounce with a right emphasis, he ought thoroughly to understand all that he says, be fully persuaded of it, and bring himself to have those affections which he desires to infuse into others. . . . As to the reading of sermons, it is peculiar to this nation, and is endured in no other. . . . Those who read ought certainly to be at more pains than for the most part they are to read true, to pronounce with an emphasis, and to raise their heads and direct their eyes to their hearers. . . . Man is a low sort of creature; he does not, nay, for the most part cannot, consider things in themselves, without those little reasonings that must, for the most part, recommend them to the affections. That a discourse be heard with any life, it must be spoken with some; and the looks and motions of the eye do carry in them such additions to what is said, that where these do not all concur, it has not all the force upon them that otherwise it might have; besides that, the people, who are too apt to censure the clergy, are easily carried into an

obvious reflection on reading, that it is an effect of laziness." [He proceeds to recommend a very elaborate preparation of sermons, but without writing or reading.] The last chapter is on church patronage.

M. DE FÉNÉLON (Archbishop of Cambray)—*Dialogues concerning Eloquence in general, and particularly that kind which is fit for the Pulpit.* (From the French, by William Stevenson, M.A.)—The dialogues begin by considering the general principles and rules of eloquence, as practised by the classical masters of the art. In considering the subject of pulpit eloquence, the common objection, that the simplicity of the Gospel demands that all rules of rhetoric be discarded as rather hurtful than useful, is answered, and it is shown that rules are needed to make a discourse simple and persuasive, and that the style of eloquence, both in the Old and New Testament, amply exemplifies the application of such rules. Fénélon is against reading sermons, and against committing them verbatim to memory. He is also unfavourable to divisions. In regard to gesture, etc., his great principle is that everything must be removed which interferes with the free action of nature. There is some criticism of the eloquence of the Christian fathers—Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine, Ambrose, Chrysostom, Gregory Nazianzen, and Basil. He finds much fault with the antithetic conceits of the Latin fathers; thinks that, on the whole, the sermons of the Fathers were not equal to their other writings, but that they had a great persuasive power. He cannot but admit that their interpretations were often most fantastic; still, as a Romish Churchman, he holds that those interpretations which were uniform and universal, must be maintained, and that Scripture is not to be interpreted except in harmony with these. For the most part there is much good sense and ability in the dialogues, but not much depth or power either of thought or feeling.

CARDINAL MAURY—*Essai sur l'Eloquence de la Chaire.*

CLAUDE—*Essay on the Composition of a Sermon.* (From the French.)—The author was a well-known minister of

the French Reformed Church in the days of Louis XIV. In his treatise he considers—1. The Choice of Texts; 2. General Rules of Sermons; 3. Connexion; 4. Division; 5. Texts to be treated by way of Explanation; 6. Texts to be treated by way of Observation; 7. Application; 8. Proposition; 9. Exordium; 10. Conclusion. A very large part of the treatise is taken up with 5 and 6. Under 6, the author specifies twenty-seven topics which may suggest suitable treatment of different texts. Mr. Simeon re-edited Claude's Essay in connexion with his own *Horæ Homileticæ*, with remarks of his own.

Bishop Wilkins—*Ecclesiastes; or, a Discourse concerning the Gift of Preaching, as it falls under the Rules of Art.* (8th edit. 1704.)—A remarkable work of its kind, not so much however for the counsels which it gives to the preacher, which are formal and scholastic, as for the lists it contains of theological works on all departments. There is a very full list of commentators on the several books of the Bible up to the author's day; books on Divinity, the Decalogue, the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and on sundry heads of divinity, practical and speculative. The Treatise on Prayer, which is subjoined, gives a very ample list of subjects for prayer, and texts falling under them.

Bishop Wilkins gives the following list of authors on Homiletics, now almost wholly forgotten and unknown :—

Hen. Alsted—*Theologia Prophetica.*
Frid. Balduini *Institutio Ministrorum.*
Rich. Barnard—*The Faithful Shepherd.*
Bowles—*De Pastore.*
Joh. Clark—*Oratoriæ Sacræ* Σκιαγραφία.
Lamb. Danæi *Methodus S. Scripturæ in concionibus tractandæ.*
Hen. Diest—*De ratione Studii Theologici.*
Des. Erasmi *Ecclesiastes.*
Nich. Hemingius—*De Pastore.*
Barth. Kekermanus—*De Rhetoricâ Ecclesiasticâ.*
Geor. Lætus—*De Ratione Concionandi ad Method. Anglican.*
Will. Perkins—*Concerning the Art of Prophesying.*
Casp. Stresonis *Technologia Theologica.*
Bishop Chappells (supposed)—*De Methodo Concionandi.*
Jo. Segobiensis—*De Prædicatione Evangelica.*
Abra. Sculteti *Axiomata Concionandi.*
Guil. Zepperus—*De arte audiendi et habendi Conciones.*

"Besides these, there are above forty other authors, who have writ particularly upon this subject, recited by DRAUDIUS in his *Bibliotheca Classica*, under the head of *Concionatorum Instructio*, p. 132."

COTTON MATHER—*Manducatio ad Ministerium, the Student and Preacher.*—The first work written in America on the subject (published about 1710). "The greater part of the work," says Kidder, "relates to the scholastic and religious character of the preacher, in which high and creditable ground is taken. In the brief sections on preaching occur the following gems:—'Employ none but well-beaten oil for the lamps of the sanctuary.' 'Go from your knees in your study to the pulpit.' 'Your sermon must be such that you may hope to have the blood of your Saviour sprinkled upon it, and his good Spirit breathing in it.' Motto for your whole ministry, 'Christ is all.' 'Be a star to lead men to the Saviour, and stop not till you see them there.' 'If you must have your notes before you in preaching, yet let there be with you a distinction between the neat using of notes and the dull reading of them. Keep up the air and life of speaking, and put not off your hearers with a heavy reading to them. How can you expect them to remember much of what you bring to them, if you remember nothing of it yourself? Let your notes be little other than a quiver, on which you may cast your eye now and then to see what arrow is to be next fetched from thence, and then, with your eye as much as may be on them whom you speak to, let it be shot away with the vivacity of one in earnest for to have the truths well entertained with the auditory.'"

DR. JOHN JENNINGS (tutor of Dr. Doddridge)—*Discourses on Preaching Christ, and on Particular and Experimental Preaching.*

SIR RICHARD BLACKMORE—*The Accomplished Preacher, or an Essay on Divine Eloquence.*

PHILIP DODDRIDGE — *Lectures on Preaching and the Ministerial Office.*

DAVID FORDYCE (Professor of Philosophy, Aberdeen)—*Theodorus; a Dialogue on the Art of Preaching.*

REV. JAMES FORDYCE.—*Eloquence of the Pulpit; Action of the Pulpit.*

THOMAS BLACKWELL, D.D. (Principal of Marischal College, Aberdeen)—*Methodus Evangelica*, or an Essay on the Preaching of the Gospel; being Discourses on the Qualifications of Gospel Ministers, Methods of Preaching and Lecturing, and the Matter of Gospel Doctrines.—The chief design is to discourage a loose, vague, heterogeneous way of preaching the Gospel, and to promote definiteness of doctrinal statement, clearness of method, and closeness of application.

GEORGE CAMPBELL, D.D. (Principal of Marischal College, Aberdeen)—*Lectures on Pulpit Eloquence.*—These lectures, twelve in number, are characterized by all the solidity, manliness, and good sense that belonged to Principal Campbell, while they also exemplify a certain coldness and dryness which was hardly less his characteristic. There is a great want in them of evangelical flavour, but much acute and sensible advice. The topics are—Importance of Pulpit Eloquence—Helps for the attainment of the Art—of the Sentiment in Pulpit Discourses—of the Expression—of Pronunciation—Various kinds of Discourses—Lectures—Explanatory Sermons—Choice of Subject and Text—Introduction—Exposition—Division—Style—Conclusion—Controversial Discourses—Discourses addressed to the Imagination—to the Passions—to the Will. In vindication of the minuteness of his counsels, Dr. Campbell quotes, with approval, the remark of a popular preacher of his time, "It is much better to preach so as to make a critic turn Christian, than so as to make a Christian turn critic."

HUGH BLAIR, D.D.—*Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres.*—Five lectures are devoted to Pulpit Eloquence.

"29. Eloquence of the Pulpit. 30. Criticism of a Sermon of Bishop Atterbury's. 31 and 32. Conduct of a Discourse in all its Parts. 33. Pronunciation, or Delivery." There is a great deal of useful, sensible advice in these lectures, but an entire absence of force and earnestness, and of appreciation of the special objects of the Christian ministry. The eloquence of the pulpit is treated like the eloquence of the bar or the senate, having only a more grave subject to deal with.

WILLIAM EDWARDS, D.D.—*The Christian Preacher; containing in part or in whole the works of Wilkins, Jennings, Franck, Watts, Doddridge, and Claude.*

GEORGE HILL, D.D. (Principal of St. Mary's College, St. Andrews)—*Counsels respecting the Duties of the Pastoral Office*, 1803 (republished 1862).—Short, sensible, and purpose-like advices on the more ordinary parts of ministerial duty, especially as these are to be performed in Scotland. The subject is treated with all the calm wisdom, and also the want of fervour, that characterized Dr. Hill's school.

STEVENSON MACGILL, D.D. (Professor of Theology in University of Glasgow).—*Considerations addressed to a Young Clergyman on some trials of principle and character which may arise in the course of his Ministry.*

WILLIAM BRAMWELL—*The Salvation Preacher.*—"Bramwell," says Kidder, "was a Wesleyan minister of extraordinary power and success." His *Salvation Preacher* was a compilation and abridgment from D'Oyly's translation of Gisbert's *Christian Eloquence.*

ADAM CLARKE, LL.D.—*Letter to a Preacher on his Entrance into the work of the Ministry.*

HENRY FOSTER BURDER—*Mental Discipline; or Hints on the Cultivation of Moral and Intellectual Habits. Addressed to Students in Theology and Young Preachers.*

J. H. Bloom—*Pulpit Oratory in the Time of James* I.

S. T. Stourtevant—*Preachers' Manual: Lectures on Preaching, with Rules and Examples for every kind of Pulpit Address.*

W. Gresley—*Ecclesiastes Anglicanus: A Treatise on Preaching, as adapted to a Church of England Congregation.*

Robert Vaughan, D.D.—*The Modern Pulpit, viewed in relation to the State of Society.*

Alexander Vinet (Professor of Theology at Lausanne) —*Pastoral Theology: The Theory of a Gospel Ministry.* (From the French.)—This is a posthumous work, consisting of notes taken by students of the addresses delivered to them by Vinet. There is a want of methodizing and condensation, but the work abounds in vivid thoughts, the coruscations of genius, resulting from an instinctive insight into the very marrow of truth. The devout spirit of the author gives deep earnestness to his counsels, and his ample learning enables him to enrich his pages with many apt quotations. After discussing the general subject of the Gospel ministry, he proceeds on a peculiar plan: "It is to trace several concentric circles around the pastor's own spirit, . . . first giving rules for his individual and interior life; then for his domestic and social life; and lastly for his pastoral life, including his pastoral, liturgical, and preaching functions." To the English edition, published by T. and T. Clark, are subjoined Bengel's "Thoughts on the Exercise of the Ministry, taken from his Life by Burk"—being a translation of a pamphlet by Vinet in 1842.

Homiletics; or the Theory of Preaching. (From the French.) —Like the preceding, a posthumous work; and subject to the disadvantage that instead of the condensation which an author's thoughts receive from his revision for the press, it contains various expansions of the same thought, from the notes of different students. Vinet is too diffuse, too individualistic, too poetical, to be an exact teacher. His func-

tion is higher than that of an ordinary instructor. He inspires, quickens, delights. The sharpness and originality of his thinking is always remarkable. The chief service of his *Homiletics* is probably that it lays hold of the leading characteristics of the French school of preachers, and gives them a Protestant direction and application. The book abounds in illustrations and quotations from Bourdaloue, Massillon, Saurin, and other great French preachers, as well as from Boileau, Maury, Buffon, and others who have written on the subject of Style and Eloquence. Many very valuable thoughts may be gathered from Vinet, and on some of the minor features of style he is unique. The fresh sparkle of genius which pervades his writings on Homiletics and Pastoral Theology forms a great contrast to the sober and prosy style in which authors generally write on these subjects. It reminds us of the *ἀνάριθμον κῦματων γέλασμα.*

L. F. Bungener—*The Preacher and the King: or, Bourdaloue in the Court of Louis* XIV. (From the French.)—A very lively work, with all the author's charm of style. The subject of preaching is discussed in dialogue between distinguished men—of whom Bourdaloue and the Protestant Claude are conspicuous. Claude is represented as bringing his influence to bear on Bourdaloue to induce him to abstain from flattery and to deal faithfully with the king. Boudaloue promises, but has in his weakness begun a flattering peroration—when, catching the eye of Claude in his audience, he stops and gracefully substitutes the peroration that Claude had approved. In fiction, men may be made to do anything; it would have been well had there been any historical foundation for so graceful a passage.

Rev. Charles Simeon—*Horæ Homileticæ:* or discourses digested into one continued series, and forming a commentary on every book of the Old and New Testament. 21 vols.

Rev. Charles Bridges—*The Christian Ministry,* with

an Inquiry into the causes of its inefficiency, and with a special reference to the Ministry of the Establishment.

This treatise is full of evangelical unction and earnestness. Part I. contains a general view of the Christian Ministry—its origin, dignity, uses, difficulties, comforts, and qualifications, and of the right preparation for it; II. Causes of the want of success in the Ministry; III. Causes of inefficiency connected with Personal Character; IV. The Public Work of the Ministry—Preaching, different kinds of Sermons, the Law, the Gospel, etc.; V. Pastoral Work—treatment of cases (the Ignorant and Careless; the Self-righteous; the False Professor; Natural and Spiritual Convictions; the Young Christian; the Backslider; the Unestablished Christian; the Confirmed and Consistent Christian)—Visitation of Sick, Ministry of the Young, Sacramental Instruction, Clerical and Church Communion, Assistants; VI. Recollections of the Ministry.

Rev. J. J. Blunt, B.D.—*The Acquirements and Principal Obligations and Duties of the Parish Priest* (1856).—A course of lectures delivered at the University of Cambridge to the students of Divinity.

Archbishop Whately—*The Parish Pastor.*—This volume consists of six lectures. I. The Parochial System, embracing the chief pastoral duties of the ministry. II. Explanations of the Bible. III. Explanations of the Prayer Book. IV. On Baptism. V. On the Lord's Supper. VI. Christian Moral Instruction, showing the right place and great importance of ethical Christian teaching. Dr. Whately shows his characteristic dislike of everything priestly by using the terms Pastor and Minister, and avoiding the terms Clergyman and Clergy.

Rev. Daniel Moore—*Thoughts on Preaching, specially in relation to the Requirements of the Age* (1861).—An excellent book, catholic in spirit, warm in tone, and sensible and scholarly in its views and execution. The subjects are—1. Preaching as an Ordinance of God. 2. The Office of the

Preacher. 3. The Intellectual Demands of the Present Age. 4. Persuasion as the Final Object of Preaching. 5. The Parts and Arrangement of a Sermon. 6. Style. 7. Subject-Matter. 8. Delivery. 9. Extempore Preaching and the Written Sermon. 10. Supplemental Topics. An Appendix is added, consisting chiefly of the views of various writers on collateral points.

Rev. John Brown, D.D.—*The Christian Pastor's Manual:* a selection of tracts on the Christian Ministry. Edited by Rev. John Brown, Edinburgh. The writers are Doddridge, Jennings, Booth, Erskine, Watts, Mason, Bostwick, Newton, Scott, and Cecil.

Rev. John Angell James—*An Earnest Ministry the Want of the Times.*—This book is an enlarged edition of a sermon preached at the anniversary celebration of Cheshunt College. Earnestness in the matter of preaching—in the manner of preaching—in the delivery of sermons—in the pastorate—examples of earnestness—motives to earnestness—means to be used for obtaining an earnest ministry—the necessity of Divine influence—are the topics treated in this volume, which is marked by all the directness, point, and Scriptural fervour for which the author was distinguished.

The Church in Earnest—a companion volume to the preceding, dwells on earnestness in personal religion—in exertion for the salvation of souls—in family religion—in public duties—hindrances, inducements, examples—means to be used for obtaining a higher degree of piety in the churches.

Rev. Dr. Winslow—*Eminent Holiness essential to an Efficient Ministry.*—The expansion of a Discourse on Song of Solomon i. 16, delivered at the opening of Stepney College, London.

Rev. William Arthur—*The Tongue of Fire.*—Admirably rousing and earnest.

Charles J. Brown, D.D.—*The Ministry: being addresses to Students of Divinity* (1872).—The subjects of the addresses are — Connexion between godliness and the Christian ministry—public prayer—preaching; and in the Appendix are some hints on the plan of sermons, pastoral visitation, communion-table addresses, and the young communicants. The little volume is full of the fire and unction of Scriptural earnestness and affection. The remarks on personal godliness, and the hints on public prayer, merit special attention.

Rev. George Macaulay—*Pastor and People: a Ministerial Charge and Directory.* (Four Pastoral Discourses, 1872.)

M. Bautain (Vicar-general and Professor at the Sorbonne, etc.)—*The Art of Extempore Speaking—Hints for the Pulpit, the Senate, and the Bar.* (From the French, 4th edit., 1867.)—Distrusting the old French method of repeating, and convinced that the thought has far more vitality when the language in which it is expressed is coined at the moment of utterance, M. Bautain strongly urges extemporaneous preaching. But the qualifications and preparations which he demands may well deter any one from this method, if he has been led to favour it from the idea of its being easy. Natural fitness, acquired knowledge, acquired habits, mental, bodily, and spiritual, are marshalled in detail among the requisites for successful extemporaneous speaking. This is a fresh, able, and interesting book, with hardly anything to offend the Protestant reader. The author's tone is devout and earnest. "Oh, you who have taken the Lord for your inheritance, and who prefer the light and service of heaven to all the honours and all the works of earth,—you, particularly, who are called to the Apostleship, and who glow with the desire to announce to men the word of God! remember that here, more than anywhere else, virtue consists in disinterestedness, and power in abnegation of self! Endeavour to see, in the triumphs of eloquence, if they be granted

you, one thing only—the glory of God. If you have the gift of touching the souls of others, seek one thing only,—to bring them to God. For this end, repress, stifle within your heart the natural movements of pride, which, since the days of sin, would attribute all things to itself, even the most manifest and the most precious gifts; and each time that you have to convey to the people the word of Heaven, ask urgently of God the grace to forget yourself, and to think of Him, and of Him only."

Rev. Thomas J. Potter (Professor of Sacred Eloquence in the Foreign Missionary College of All-Hallows)—*Sacred Eloquence, or the Theory and Practice of Preaching* (3d edit., Dublin, 1868).—This book, like M. Bautain's, is by a Roman Catholic author, and presents the subject from the English Roman Catholic point of view. It deals more than usually in mechanical rules, and dwells for the most part on the external aspects of the subject; within that circle, it is for the most part sensible and able. The illustrations are nearly all drawn from preachers approved by the Church of Rome; in English, such preachers as Cardinal Wiseman, Dr. Newman, and Archbishop Manning. The writer is strongly in favour of written sermons committed to memory, does not consider reading to be preaching at all, and hopes that no Roman Catholic student will resort to it. The leaven of Roman doctrine appears in the very first page; "when the poor penitent is kneeling at our feet, it is easy for us to reconcile him to his offended Maker; but the difficulty is to bring him to that point."

AMERICAN BOOKS.

Ebenezer Porter, D.D.—*Lectures on Homiletics and Preaching, and on Public Prayer, together with Sermons and Letters* (6th edit.).—Dr. Porter was the first Professor of Sacred Rhetoric in the Theological Seminary, Andover. His work is a copious and instructive discussion of the

subject of Preaching and Prayer, with numerous illustrations and quotations. He does not take up the subject of *pastoral* duty, strictly so called.

THOMAS H. SKINNER (New York)—*Aids to Preaching and Hearing.*

DANIEL P. KIDDER, D.D. (Professor in the Garrett Biblical Institute, United States)—*Treatise on Homiletics, designed to illustrate the true Theory and Practice of the Preaching of the Gospel.*—There is a great amount of useful matter in this volume, though it is somewhat cumbered by want of simplicity in the arrangement, and by multiplicity of divisions. It goes more fully than any similar treatise into the literature of the subject, especially in the Appendix, which presents us with a list of authors in the scholastic and in the modern period, and with a very copious and interesting summary of the views of leading divines, authors, and churches on the best mode of preaching—whether reading, reciting, or extemporizing.

GARDINER SPRING, D.D.—*The Power of the Pulpit: Thoughts addressed to Christian Ministers.*

WILLIAM G. T. SHEDD, D.D. (Professor in Union Theological Seminary, New York)—*Homiletics and Pastoral Theology* (3d edition, 1867).—This is one of the best treatises on the subject, whether British or American. The combination in its author of the accomplished scholar and the humble, earnest Christian, gives it a stamp of great value. The author is careful to set before us the *principles* applicable to the various subjects which he discusses, thus making his work something more than a mere collection of practical advices,—a union of the philosophy and the practice of homiletics. The principle of generalization is thus fully carried out; of detail there is less than in some other works, especially in the department of Pastoral Theology.

NICOLAS MURRAY, D.D.—*Preachers and Preaching.*

JAMES W. ALEXANDER, D.D.—*Thoughts on Preaching, being Contributions to Homiletics.*—This is a posthumous publication by the well-known ex-professor in the Princeton Theological Seminary, afterwards pastor of one of the chief congregations in New York. It was his habit to jot down from time to time whatever occurred to him on ministerial work; these notes, with a series of letters to young ministers, and several articles on the same subject contributed to the Princeton *Review*, constitute the present volume. It is necessarily fragmentary and unorganized. The observations are eminently fresh, vivid, unconventional, full of practical, historical, and spiritual interest.

ENOCH POND, D.D. (Professor in the Theological Seminary, Bangor)—*Lectures on Pastoral Theology* (1867).—This work does not embrace Homiletics, and is perhaps the fullest published on pastoral theology; on some points, such as the management of revivals, it is very elaborate.

JOHN A. BROADUS, D.D., LL.D. (Professor in Baptist Seminary, South Carolina).—A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons. Nearly 500 pages devoted to preaching alone,—the result of much reading and thought.

REV. WILLIAM TAYLOR—*The Model Preacher; comprised in a series of Letters on the Best Mode of Preaching the Gospel* (1859).—Mr. Taylor is one of the most remarkable revival preachers of the day, and as such has had much success in Africa, India, and elsewhere. The letters were originally addressed to his brother, who was a travelling preacher in Oregon. The first four chapters are on the art of arresting attention, the author having a very great regard for "surprise-power." The book is full of anecdotes, chiefly of American preachers who were entirely untrammelled by conventionalities, and for open-air preaching especially, it contains many good hints and counsels.

REV. HENRY WARD BEECHER—*Yale Lectures on Preaching. Delivered before the Theological Department of Yale Col-*

lege, Newhaven, Connecticut (1872).—This is but the first instalment of a three years' course. It is confined chiefly to the *personal* elements which bear an important relation to preaching. It is not merely an exposition of the author's views, but a reflex of his methods. It exhibits both his defects and his remarkable excellencies as a preacher. It is, as might be expected, unconventional in the last degree, and full of the human element, of human sympathy, interest, affection, and power. Beecher is the opposite of a systematic teacher. His doctrinal views are not precise, and he aims comparatively little at reasoning or formal instruction; his object being to stir the feelings, knock up the conscience, kindle the imagination, and shake men out of their supineness and lethargy. There is much to be gathered from this volume, provided it is not read under the impression that it is complete. Mr. Beecher's wheels never run in ruts, nor do dust or cobwebs gather on any part or product of his brain.

H. C. Fish.—*Pulpit Eloquence* (2 vols.)—Being specimens and sketches of preaching in different ages and countries.

Pulpit Eloquence of the Nineteenth Century (1 vol.)

ARTICLES IN REVIEWS.

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BIBLIOTHECA SACRA.

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„ „ Pulpit Eloquence—*Nathaniel Adams.*
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„ „ American Pulpit—*W. A. Stearns.*
„ „ Chrysostom as a Preacher.
„ iv. Schott's Treatise on Sermons.
„ vi. Demosthenes and Massillon.
„ „ Reinhardt's Sermons—*Professor Park.*
„ xii. Relation of Pastor and People.

See also *Essays on the Sacred Ministry, selected from the Bibliotheca Sacra and other American periodicals, with a Preface by W. H. Murch, D.D.* (London, 1853), containing, among other subjects, papers on—Literary Enthusiasm—Importance of Knowledge of Mental Philosophy—Knowledge of his Times important to a Christian Minister—Causes of Corruption in Pulpit Eloquence—Boldness in the Preacher—Discriminative Preaching—Connexion between Theological Study and Pulpit Eloquence—Manner in the Preacher—Eminent Success dependent on Eminent Piety—Hints on Extemporaneous Preaching.

BIBLICAL REPERTORY.

Vol. iii. On the Mode of Catechetical Instruction of the Apostles.
„ „ (N.S.) What constitutes a Call to the Gospel Ministry.
„ vi. Bridges' Christian Ministry.
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